

BLITZ

the tall guy

*Crazy, crafty, tall
Jeff Goldblum*

mad or what?

The weird world of Ken Russell

thai-sick

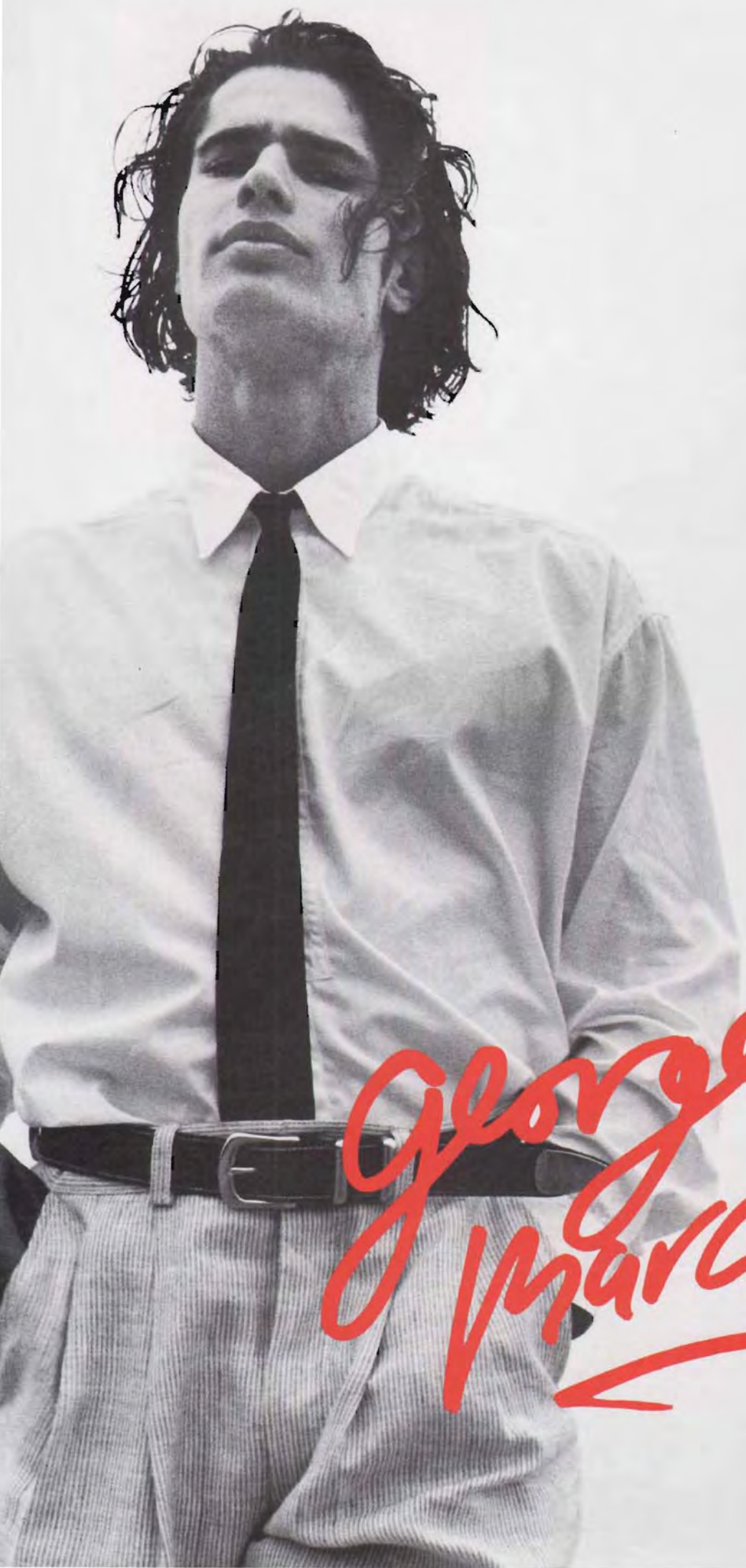
Paul Morley at loose in Thailand

rubbish

Sifting through famous people's dustbins

plus

tama janowitz
gilbert & george
alan yentob
new italian art
richard eyre
richard torry



georges
marciano



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THE PALACE OFF BOLD ST
OPENS SPRING 1989

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Jeff Goldblum by Gino Sprio

BLITZ MAGAZINE

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ERRATA: the 'Hanging Out' photographs on page 114 of the last issue of BLITZ were by GINO SPRIO. Also, Anna, the model featured in the 'Arab Baby' fashion feature is at the SELECT agency, and not as stated.

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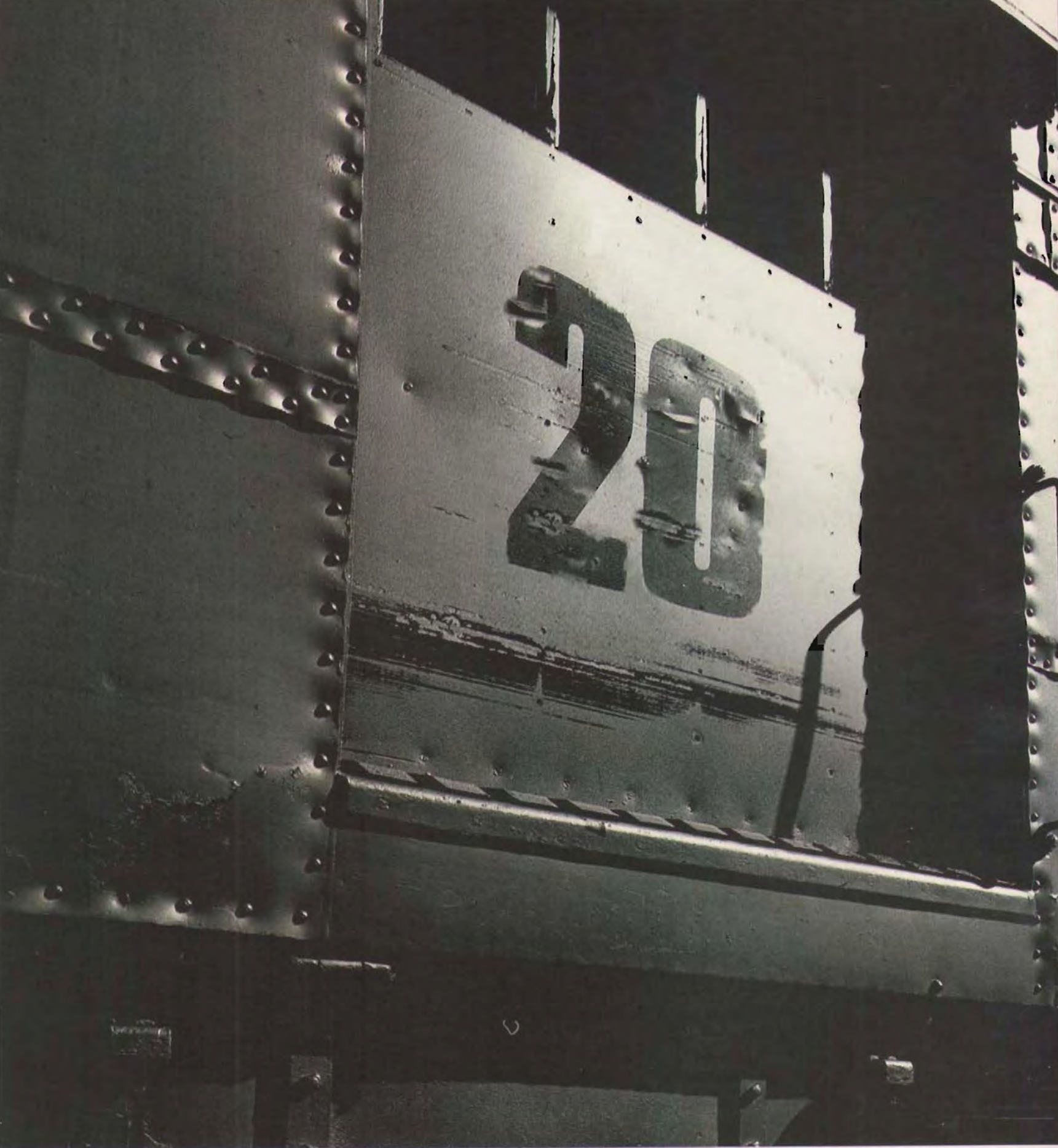
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MIDDLE TAR As d
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Please address all letters to: The Editor, BLITZ Magazine, 40-42 Newman Street, London W1P 3PA.

letters

I thoroughly enjoyed PJ O'Rourke's article about Beirut and his tour of the Western sector, but what about the East end? All those who do not find pleasure in being "shelled enough to make them party reptiles" or who discover that the danger does not "add zest to the simple pleasures of life", may find the East end slightly more digestible.

The Christians in the East may be "smug and pseudo-French" but at least they are not pro-Iranian Muslim fanatics.

O'Rourke has truly made sensation of jokes, comments and wrote them down as facts. The truth is that every Lebanese has suffered during the war; to ignore this and brand the cautious as "an insult to oriental fatalism" is truly sick.

The article totally ignored East Beirut and its newly built suburbs which bear no physical scars from the war and so provoke no sensationalism.

However, besides the bias and sense of incompleteness, the article proved to be mildly amusing.

AMINE MAHFOUZ
Beirut/Liverpool.

I've always thought that Paul Morley could damage your mental health, although I

never realised he could have an equally devastating physical effect. But how else to explain those pallid pictures of Joanne Whalley – even those mesmerising eyes lack their usual sparkle – accompanying his equally pallid (non)interview with the lovely lady in the February issue? (Or perhaps I've missed the point and this was Mr Morley's idea of witty prose and Steve Speller's of 'artistic' photography).

There again, what else can you expect from an interviewer who doesn't even know his subject's christian name and thinks her credits include *Boys From The Black Stuff* when in fact her association with the work of Alan Bleasdale is through her appearance in the Bleasdale-scripted film *No Surrender*?

No wonder she's so reluctant to give interviews!

MARK MURTON
Gunnislake, Cornwall.

Why did you ever publish that piece on Jack Nicholson [December]? It has made my life hell!

One day, while sitting with my loved one, I happened to ask him if he would like to eat with me. He replied, "Wrong verb, honey! Wrong verb!" Later that month, I asked a friend of mine if he wanted to go dancing.

He too replied, "Wrong verb, honey! Wrong verb!" Some time later I made the mistake of asking another pal to go shopping. She retorted, "Wrong verb, honey! Wrong verb!"

I found out that they had all read the December issue of your magazine and had stolen this 'wrong verb' business from the interview with Nicholson. Despite the fact that it caused me great psychological stress, I must admit it was a ripping good article.

"Wrong adjective, honey! Wrong adjective!"

JANE JOHNSON
South London.

Re: BLITZ Magazine Issue No. 72 1988 – Article on pages 31 and 32 of the Magazine entitled 'Pump Up The Volume'.

We act for the artists and producers professionally known as Coldcut and are most concerned with the reference to our client in the above article which we feel is somewhat misleading.

Please note that the track entitled 'Doctorin' The House' was a Coldcut track featuring Yazz as was 'Stop This Crazy Thing' which featured Junior Reid. Both such tracks were released on the label of Ahead Of Our Time Records/Big Life

Records.

Furthermore, Coldcut, not the Beatmasters, produced the track 'The Only Way Is Up' for the artist Yazz.

Accordingly, we would be grateful if you would print the appropriate apology in the next edition of your magazine to clarify the position.

SEIFERT SEDLEY WILLIAMS
Solicitors, Holborn.

We acknowledge our error and hope that this sets the matter straight. Apologies.

I was pleased to read your rave notices about the InterCity ad ['Ads Review', January] but sorry about Jim Mactool's exceedingly jaundiced view of life ['Letters', February]. I run InterCity's East Coast Main Line from London to Edinburgh and if Jim would like to write to me, I will arrange for him to come from King's Cross to York in clean, air conditioned comfort and relax with an Iris Murdoch novel... Oh! yes, he can also bring his grandfather, or father, and lose a game of chess as well.

SIMON FRASER
InterCity Manager
British Railways Board
Regional Headquarters
York YO1 1HT.

SARAH JANE MORRIS

SARAH JANE MORRIS

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TRIX WORRELL: ACTOR

Trix Worrell is part of a heroic tradition. Having arrived at the gates of success via St Lucia and Peckham, he is further proof that adversity can breed talent and success just as well as Eton and RADA. Crash-landing among South London's finest at the age of five, he grew into an angry and unemployed actor. 'We have no black characters at the moment, darling,' was the standard rebuff. 'To get work I had to create it,' he says. He launched the Basement community youth theatre company from the Albany Theatre in New Cross and turned his attention to directing and writing. To his surprise he won a Channel 4 writer's competition and entered the National Film School. When he left he was invited by Martin Stellman to collaborate on the script for *For Queen And Country*. The result had a disturbing power and a cruel wit. More recently, *Desmond's*, Channel 4's black situation comedy, has displayed his latent humour and ever-developing finesse. Now he's working on a Sixties comedy feature tentatively called *Choc-Ice*. He chomps 'to get on with it', motivated by the desire to see 'a more positive portrayal of blacks on film and television.' Inspirational stuff.

NICK KNIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHER

Way back in 1984, Nick Knight snapped the likes of Madonna, Keith Allen and Paul Weller for BLITZ. Nowadays he photographs cars, washing machines, beers and Yohji Yamamoto garments for the advertising industry. But despite this more lucrative work, Knight is best known for his fashion photography. Realistically hyped as 'one of the most respected and admired fashion photographers of his generation', his more recent fashion pictures are being displayed for most of April and May at The Photographers' Gallery (Gt Newport St, London WC2). Yet Knight refuses to accept that this is any evidence of being a star photographer. 'It's just as hard as when I started six years ago. There can be no complacency. It's only when you have to fight and struggle for a picture that it works. One nice thing is that at least now, people tend to see a picture I've done before and ask me to do it again, whereas they used to just ask me to copy someone else.'

RITCHIE RICH: MUSICIAN

Keeping abreast of Ritchie Rich is a frantic business. In the past year his duties have included remixing tracks for Troublefunk, Eric B and The Pasadenas, producing the music for Janet Street-Porter's *Behind The Beat* and earning Top Forty success in collaboration with The Jungle Brothers. More recently his own 'Salsa House' has become a hot US import in the clubs. And now his remixes of De La Soul's 'Me, Myself and I', and Jimmy Polo and Funtopia's 'Freedom' are heading up the dance charts. Nor do Ritchie's talents lie exclusively behind the mixing desk. He can play the trumpet and keyboards, and he is also a shrewd businessman. Little over a year ago, he co-founded Gee Street Records and, fittingly, his debut album is due to appear through the dance label later this month. "I'm enjoying life," he says. "Like, when I was young I always wanted to have a Porsche. I can get one now so I've got one. I don't really care what other people think. If I want it, I'm gonna get it and that's it."



MARK ELLINGHAM: WRITER

In post-university ennui Mark Ellingham "dashed off some letters". Of the recipient publishers, only Routledge Kegan & Paul agreed to meet him before he wrote anything. The upshot committed Mark to producing a *Rough Guide To Greece*. Working from a squat with Natania Jansz and John Fisher, he bashed out the book and the Rough Guide empire was begun. Now, seven years later, Mark's 29 and he's had a "frustrating deskbound year". He's been busy buying out the *Rough Guides* from RK&P and introducing new desktop publishing – there's been no time to travel or write. Such streamlining and expansion, however, has increased the Rough output. New and updated Guides to Hungary, Spain, Mexico, Greece, Sicily and Venice appear this month and the company is now focusing on more thematic titles. By the end of the year there should be a travel guide for women. And specialist books for the disabled and wildlife lovers are currently being assessed. "All in all," he sighs, "it's become disturbingly like a real business."

KATHY BURKE: COMEDIENNE

Kathy Burke's turning point came when she was seen shagging umpteen headbangers in *The Comic Strip's Fun Seekers*. This inauspicious role in the Comic Strip's parody of 18–30 holidays introduced her to Rowland Rivron, who invited her to join his dreadful cabaret band, *Raw Sex*. *Raw Sex* eventually gave birth to Tina Bishop, Burke's obnoxious *Last Resort* character. This may, in turn, spawn a documentary called *Day In The Life Of Tina Bishop*. "Hopefully," says Burke, "it will be very depressing... and funny." More uplifting has been her recent pop involvement with French & Saunders in *Lananeeneenoonoo*, and the unsurprisingly successful 'Help' single for Comic Relief. Now she's moved on to *Amongst Barbarians*, a new comic play which comes to London's Hampstead Theatre Club in April. "These two guys get sentenced to death for smuggling drugs out of Malaysia," she explains. "And when you meet their families, who have come over to support them, you wonder who are the barbarians."

LEA ANDERSON: DANCER

"In the Tate Gallery," says Lea Anderson, "there's this painting of two Elizabethan women sitting in bed with their babies. It's very ornate and fussy. Underneath, the caption says, 'The Cholmondeley sisters were born at the same time, they also got married, gave birth and died on the same day.' 'That's where I took our name from. I like the perverse.'" Anderson choreographs and dances with the all-female Cholmondeleys (pronounced 'Chumleys'). After dalliances with art school, music and sculpture, she has found her niche in contemporary, original dance. "It's the excitement of the music and the versatility and immediacy of movement," she says, that finally seduced her. Currently The Cholmondeleys and their male counterparts, The Featherstonehaughs (pronounced 'Fanshaws'), are touring with *Flag*, which Anderson choreographed. They perform at Brighton's Zap Club this month. Jazz accompaniment is from The Pointy Birds. Anderson hopes to attract new audiences to dance. "I can normally say hello to half the people at a performance—it tends to be the same crowd. We used to perform outside the usual dance venues, but we got fed up with never getting paid and having to dance on slippery floors covered in beer and fag-ends."



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Health Departments



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ER, BRONCHITIS AND OTHER CHEST DISEASES
Chief Medical Officers

APRIL 1 St Hugh of Grenoble's Day, subsequently known as April Fool's Day (it is unknown whether this was pure coincidence or intended as a comment on the state of Hugh's own intellectual capacity). How many times will the great *Panorama* SPAGHETTI-TREE hoax of 1957 be discussed today? Make a diary note. Later this afternoon, as a jolly jape, eight of

Photography Museum until June.

4 St Benedict The Black's Day. Last year, former Supreme **MARY WILSON** regained possession of a 1970 Mercedes stretch limo previously owned by George Harrison and John Lennon. She bought the car from Harrison in 1975 and kept it in storage. In 1980, it was stolen, and turned up five years later in a rock'n'roll auction at Sotheby's. Wilson spent \$200,000 and three years getting a court order to restore the car to her. Today, her insurance policy on the car will unexpectedly lapse, and shortly thereafter a building will collapse on it. Unlucky.

BYLINES

SALMAN RUSHDIE's closest friends will don rented robes and false beards in order to storm his safe house, shouting "Death to the Infidel!" in funny voices while brandishing rubber scimitars. Five years ago, with more serious intent, Marvin Gaye Sr emptied a handgun into his son. Also, the first show in the new ITV series, **SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES** – a magazine format cinema news and reviews show – airs tonight. The producers – the team responsible for *Wired* – promise something more serious than *Film '89* and less artsy than *The Late Show* or *The Media Show*. The first programme includes an interview with Melanie Griffith and her mother, former Hitchcock starlet Tippi Hedren, and an exclusive location report on the Jerry Lee Lewis bio-pic, *Great Balls Of Fire*. Set the video for around 11pm.

2 St Mary The Egyptian's Day. Argentina invades the Falklands in 1982. No apparent connection. Last chance to see the month-long exhibition of the best of the last thirty years' photojournalism in **EYEWITNESS**, at the Camden Arts Centre in London. Same exhibition continues at Bradford's National

5 St Vincent Ferrer's Day. 1976: **HOWARD HUGHES** dies in a jet ambulance above Texas. Numerous American legal firms become rich as a result of the numerous suits and counter-suits which ensued concerning various contested wills.

7 St Nilus of Sora's Day. The International **CLOWNS CONVENTION** begins in Bognor Regis. Delegates will arrive by collapsing car or projected from a giant cannon.

8 St Perpetuus' Day. **PABLO PICASSO** dies aged 91 in 1973; **CLINT EASTWOOD** becomes Mayor of Carmel, California in 1986; Tory MP Harvey Proctor charged with gross indecency in 1987.

11 St Guthlac's Day. Those intrigued by the column on New Italian Art in this month's review section should head for the Riverside Studios, where some of the artists from the Saatchi Premio are exhibiting as part of the **ART = EXISTENCE** show until May 14. Also transmission date for the first of six programmes showing the best performances from the Seventh *Just For Laughs* International Comedy Festival. Channel 4, 11pm.

12 St Sabas the Goth's Day. Having put away his weapon (Snurk! Snurk!), former 007 **ROGER MOORE** (Fnurr! Fnurr!) – the acting world's equivalent to Finbarr Saunders – gives it all he's got (Wuuooaar! Wuuoarrr!) on the first night (Arf! Arf!) of Andrew Lloyd Webber's cloying *Aspects Of Love* musical.

13 St Carpus and St Pappylus' Day. First day of the **PORTOBELLO CONTEMPORARY ART FESTIVAL**. Thirteen Notting Hill galleries open their doors with a series of special exhibitions. A favourite piece will be 'Edwina's Folly' – Mike Roles' photographic sculpture of a group of **CHICKENS** – which forms part of the Animal Magic show at the Special Photographers' Company. Also

THE CRITIC'S RAVE (OR OTHERWISE) A tally of critics' opinions

HIGH HOPES

FAVOURABLE (11) The Listener, The Observer, The Independent, The Guardian, Mail On Sunday, News Of The World, Evening Standard, Time Out, Melody Maker, The Late Show, Kaleidoscope (Radio 4).
UNFAVOURABLE (6) BLITZ, The Face, i-D, The Sun, NME, Film '89.
UNDECIDED (1) The Sunday Times.

DIE HARD

FAVOURABLE (11) The Times, The Sunday Times, The Observer, The Independent, The Guardian, Mail On Sunday, Evening Standard, The Sun, Melody Maker, Film '89, The Late Show.
UNFAVOURABLE (3) The Listener, NME, i-D.
UNDECIDED (3) News Of The World, Mail On Sunday, The Face.

COCKTAIL

FAVOURABLE (1) The Sun.
UNFAVOURABLE (10) The Listener, The Sunday Times, The Independent, The Guardian, Mail On Sunday, Evening Standard, BLITZ, The Face, Time Out, NME.
UNDECIDED (2) Melody Maker, Film '89.

THE GOOD MOTHER

FAVOURABLE (6) The Sunday Times, The Sun, BLITZ, Time Out, i-D, Kaleidoscope.
UNFAVOURABLE (3) The Observer, The Guardian, Evening Standard.
UNDECIDED (4) The Listener, The Independent, Mail On Sunday, Film '89.

NEW YORK – LOU REED

FAVOURABLE (12) The Times, The Sunday Times, The Observer, The Independent, The Guardian, Evening Standard, BLITZ, The Face, Arena, Time Out, NME, Melody Maker.
UNFAVOURABLE (0) **UNDECIDED (0)**

BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES by TOM WOLFE

FAVOURABLE (9) The Listener, The Times, The Sunday Times, Mail On Sunday, BLITZ, Arena, The Face, i-D, Melody Maker.
UNFAVOURABLE (3) The Observer, The Independent, Kaleidoscope.
UNDECIDED (2) The Guardian, NME.



check out the paintings of rising star Ian Jones at Anderson O'Day. Also Sir John Gielgud's 85th birthday.

17 St Donnan's Day. Beginning a marathon back-slapping session, **FRANK SINATRA**, **LIZA MINELLI** and **SAMMY DAVIS JR** perform the first of five nights together at London's Royal Albert Hall. "You're a great entertainer, Frank", "I couldn't have done it without you, Liza", "You know, Sammy, my mom was Judy Garland." The seats will be **MOIST** with the tears of sentimentality; florists throughout the capital will be cleaned out of red rose bouquets.

19 St Leo IX's Day. A selection of male nudes by photographer **BRUCE WEBER** opens at the Karsten Schubert gallery in London. Winkles aplenty.

21 St Simeon Barsabba'e's Day. Another day of celebration for the tiny but perfectly formed publication *The Fortean Times*, now fifteen (or so) years old. Specialising in the documenting of weird phenomena and bizarre happenings, the splendid current issue features such true-life delights as the **LIZARD MAN** of South Carolina (a seven-foot, three-fingered, scaly green swamp-dwelling humanoid – "he chased my car," claims Chris Davis, 17); the 'truth' behind the Turin Shroud; a scholarly account of the Yorkshire Water Wolf; the girl who got pregnant as a result of **ORAL SEX**; and the following grotesque tale which we print verbatim, originally from the German paper *Bild-Zeitung*: "A 26-year-old diabetic from Toulouse in France died while taking a hot shower in January 1988. In June the gasboard noticed that the man had an enormous unpaid gas bill and police broke into his flat. They discovered the dead man, still taking a hot shower five months later." Essential reading – copies are available priced £1.75 from *Fortean Times*, 96 Mansfield Road, London NW3 2HX.



BLACKADDER THE THIRD, best of Rowan Atkinson's *Blackadder* series, is now available on BBC video. There are two collections available, each containing three of the six episodes, and we have fifteen pairs of tapes looking for a caring home. To win one, send us a postcard stating the name of the actor who plays Blackadder's sidekick Baldrick. Answers should reach us before April 17th, addressed to 'BLACKADDER, BLITZ MAGAZINE, 40/42 Newman Street, London W1P 3PA'. First fifteen out of the hat on that date win. Multiple entries will be disqualified.

23 St George's Day. Proving that he's still alive and kicking (also blowing and sucking), saxophone colossus **SONNY ROLLINS** brings his godlike talent to the Drury Lane Theatre Royal for a one-off 'gig'.

24 St Mark's Eve. 266th anniversary of the first recorded use of an 'elastic sheath' or condom. In celebration of this important anniversary, we are pleased to be able to offer **FREE CONDOMS** to 5,000 BLITZ readers, courtesy of Durex Safe-Play. To take advantage of this offer, write to "BLITZ/Durex Safe-Play Offer, c/o Leslie Bishop Company Ltd, 114 Cromwell Road, London SW7 4ES". We will send you a packet of Safe-Play completely free of charge by return. On this day in 1925, having raised £20,000 to build a 2,000-seat stadium in Sydney, Australia, specially for the purpose, members of the Order of the Star of the East congregated to await the second coming of Christ. By 1929, the group got bored waiting and the stadium was knocked down.

25 St Mark's Day. 33rd anniversary of Elvis Presley's first British Number One – 'Heartbreak Hotel'. To mark the occasion, a widow in Bolton will make a sighting of **ELVIS** when he arrives this morning to read her gas meter.

26 St Stephen of Perm's Day. Don't miss Dora Bryan and Norman Rossington in *Hello Dolly* at the Birmingham Hippodrome!

27 St Zita's Day. Grand opening of the Ninth Shetland Folk Festival, held on the Shetland Isles. Capacity crowds are expected.

29 St Robert of Molesme's Day. 1913: after several painful failed attempts, Whitcomb Judson of Chicago, Illinois, perfects his invention of the **ZIP FASTENER** at enormous personal cost. He left no heirs. ●





SMIRNOFF

ONE STEP AHEAD

eyre

Richard Eyre is the new
director of the National
Theatre. As he sees it, his
mission is to put some balls
back into mainstream
theatre.

direct action

INTERVIEW ANDY LAVENDER
PHOTOGRAPH ERIC GAUSTER

Two security guards sit behind the reception desk at the stage door of the National Theatre. It is nine o'clock in the morning.

"I've come to interview Richard Eyre."

One of the guards flicks through a directory, looking for the extension number.

"What was the name?"

"Richard Eyre."

Eyre is not in his office. Nor is his secretary. There is no answer from the press office. The theatre is obviously still slumbering. One of the guards offers round the fags. A colleague comes to the desk.

"Has Richard Eyre come in yet?" asks the first.

"Dunno. I don't know who he is."

Eyre's fourth floor office in the National's dreary concrete intestines is not swanky, but it does have an expansive view overlooking the Thames. There's even a director's chair with 'Richard Eyre' stencilled on the back. So he does exist.

Just for the record, then, Richard Eyre is the latest director of the National Theatre, taking over from tetchy old Sir Peter Hall last September. His brave new programming has already earned applause within the theatre world – and not just amongst the establishment, mark you, but with the more radical young turks as well. The National is again a place to be. New work by Davids Mamet and Hare has made the critics dribble; fresh-blood directors include the daring, stylish Declan Donnellan, justly notorious for his work with *Cheek By Jowl*, and an adventurous commissioning policy sees some of the country's most exciting young writers flexing their muscles in the theatre's studio space.

Apart from being an established theatre director, Eyre has also had his directorial finger in film pies (*Laughterhouse*, *Ploughman's Lunch*) and television pies (*Comedians* and *The Insurance Man* for instance). And it was he who directed *Tumbledown*, Charles Wood's TV drama about a soldier who had part of his brain blown away in the Falklands. ►



VI

"Theatre is like sex, you
know. You don't stop doing it
because it's not great. There's
a feeling that if the theatre
isn't a multiple orgasm every
time, it's not worth going to.
But when it's good, there's
nothing like it."

eyre

► *Tumbledown*, you remember, was designated "controversial" by various sections of the establishment. In the face of the usual hysteria, Eyre calmly stood his ground and insisted that, yes, the play *should* be seen as political. The press gasped and spluttered.

And now Eyre breezes in at the stage door. Mid-forties, casual in a striped shirt and leather jacket, he doesn't *look* like a subversive. Nor is he a flamboyant man.

"Sorry I'm late," he apologises, matter of fact. "We'll over-run a bit."

"Richard's meeting at 9.30 is immutable," the press rep had told me earlier in the week. In fact, the interview ran on until about 9.45, despite various heads poking quizzically round the door. Eyre answered in full and never – that I noticed – looked at his watch. These small things, I ponder over a sip of coffee, are perhaps part of what earns the man respect.

Eyre's latest project is a production of *Hamlet*. Nooo, not another Shakespeare, you groan. And *Hamlet* at that. Mock at your peril, however, for in the words of Charles 'Tumbledown' Wood, Eyre is a director of both "intellect and integrity". And Daniel Day Lewis plays the Prince. This will not be a run-of-the-mill Shakespeare. Eyre's production, set in a Renaissance world with a solid castle of a set, will doubtless be classical in style – don't expect the kind of radical deconstruction which smaller companies like Cheek By Jowl and Red Shift would come up with – but even so, it should still be a heavyweight.

Eyre has directed the play before, nine years ago at the Royal Court, with Jonathan Pryce as Hamlet. "That was a notorious production," he recalls, "because there was no ghost." I remember it well, a schoolkid on the Shakespeare trail. Pryce doubled up in pain, the ghost's strangled voice issuing from somewhere in his stomach. The traditionalists shuddered. This time round, then, is there going to be a real flesh'n'blood apparition?

"Yeah. I suppose with the passing of time I'm more inclined to believe in the reality of the supernatural. And for *Hamlet*, the ghost is real – it's a scene in which you see something of the relationship between the father and the son. There's a statue of the father in the set. The shadow of the father, you see, hangs metaphorically over the whole play."

Hamlet and the Oedipal deathride: discuss. Contrary to those academics and directors who use up much ink and hot air debating the finer advances of *Hamlet*'s tragic status, Eyre's line on the play is cogent and down to earth.

"It's the first and greatest story about growing up. It's the story of a young man – he's an undergraduate – kicking against the established order. But in order to fulfil the condition his father sets him – namely the vengeance of his death – he has to get absorbed in the so-called adult world, and suppress all those instincts which are gentle, compassionate and which the play presents as womanish. It's a disaster when that happens to men. The tragedy of *Hamlet* is that he is dealing with a man's world in a man's way."

Even so, I suggest, *Hamlet* just doesn't belong to the late Eighties. All that talking to himself, all that nitpicking over fine moral details – hardly a model of efficiency. *Not* a man for our times, surely?

"Well, I think it *is*," says Eyre, leaning towards the tape-recorder for emphasis. "The story, you see, is, um, probably more acutely and painfully apt now in this country than at any time in the last thirty years. *Hamlet*'s madness is considered to be upsetting the political health of the state, so we're very aware of the needs of politics taking precedence over the needs of individual freedom. And that sounds pretty familiar – doesn't it?"

Are you a political director?

"Well, the very act of saying you're apolitical is a political decision. I'm not an ideologue, but clearly I do see the world in terms of the way it operates. Every time you do a play like *Hamlet*, which is *par excellence* about the state and the individual, you *are* dabbling in politics."

Chief dabbling partner in this production is Daniel Day Lewis. Already a cult actor by virtue of his careful selection of projects, his appeal is more difficult to pin down than that of the new breed of post-sensitive English film idols. He is, clearly, not a conventional actor. Opinion is divided as to quite how good this makes him. For my tuppenceworth he's one of the most *dangerous* actors around, treading on the very edge of caricature without falling in. That pouting swagger in *My Beautiful Laundrette*; the pinched reserve of Cecil Vyse in *A Room With A View*; that sexy smoulder in *The Unbearable Lightness Of Being*. There is more here than your average method actor would produce in months of Sundays. Call me pretentious, but the way he *displays* those characters is almost Brechtian.

"No, I know what you mean," Eyre cranes his neck and takes a breath. "I know these occasions are ritual moments of gush, but he *is* pretty special. He has extraordinary wit as an actor, and great physical power. I think he's the fittest actor I've ever worked with – he runs about eight miles a day – and he works *incredibly* hard. What is un-British is that he's very much popular and streetwise, but at the same time he's terribly literate and sensitive. I mean, he's a poet's son, and it certainly shows in *Hamlet*. He has this chameleon quality – it's partly to do with his reticence – where he finds release by entering into other people's personalities, and that's the true actor's instinct."

He is also very busy. No *Hamlet*-like procrastination here. "When other people are having lunch," says the press rep, "Daniel's got a fight call." Richard Eyre also has a busy schedule. He has a meeting to go to. Half past nine, the theatre has woken up and I'm still asking questions. He remains unfazed.

Let's get things into perspective. There is at least one person inside the National Theatre who doesn't know who Richard Eyre is. But there are others who would say that, at last, there's someone in charge who has a bit of vision and imagination. Someone who's capable of standing up to the culture-butchers. And someone who might, just might nudge the National away from its reputation as a watering-hole for the haute-bourgeoisie. Perhaps, regardless of that director's chair and the panoramic view, *that's* the reason I'm here at this too-early hour, talking to someone who should be somewhere else.

"I know that theatre isn't very fashionable," Eyre says. "I know it's felt that there's a certain amount of fustiness about it, whereas movies are sexy, and there's an increasing feeling that opera is sexier than theatre. All I would say is that when it's good, theatre is just wonderful. It's like sex, you know. You live by the moments it's wonderful, and you don't stop doing it because it's not great. I think there's a feeling that if the theatre isn't a multiple orgasm every time, it's not worth going to. But when it's good it's fantastically good. There is nothing like it, like being in a theatre with a live performer – a terrific, high-octane live performer – and a large audience who are going with the show. It's a sensational feeling."

A mere stone's throw from Eyre's office, at the foot of Hungerford Bridge, a grimy juggler is juggling. On the corner of the bridge huddles one of London's homeless, earning a little less money than the juggler. Daniel Day Lewis goes without lunch. Richard Eyre talks of theatre and sex in the same breath. There is all kinds of madness on the South Bank.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVIE HUGHES ★ HAIR BY TISH AT ELLIS HELEN ★ MAKE UP BY DEBBIE BUNN AT PIN UP ★ ALL CLOTHES BY RICHARD TORRY

star





Resplendent in a startling and multi-branched Daliesque moustache, and with one dark eyebrow constantly arching, RICHARD TORRY represents the cream of British menswear. His collection at the Paris menswear shows in February met with widespread acclaim, and a glittering future appears to beckon.

Torry's career was launched at Middlesex School of Art & Fashion ten years ago. A rather demented star, he created highly stylised, calico-fringed jackets, which were hungrily snapped up by the fashionable young men of the time. Around the same time, Malcolm McLaren spotted Torry's elegant form striding down Oxford Street in a particularly rare pair of bondage trousers, and asked him to audition for the role of lead singer in Bow Wow Wow. But after two auditions, Torry found himself incapable of wrapping his tongue around the infuriating 'C30 C60 C90 Go!' lyrics, and he rejected a career as a rock god. Instead he asked Vivienne Westwood to look over his first proper collection. She loathed it, and told him so. Undaunted, and refreshed by her honesty, he soldiered on, later working with her for one season on her famed Buffalo collection.

Introduced to America and Tokyo by nightclub goddess and designer's muse Susanne Bartsch, he now enjoys secure backing from a Japanese company. Tired of the lack of support from British shops – he has phoned Joseph "at least forty times" without success, he says – Torry endures the very serious discipline of working with the Japanese for long periods of time each year, occasionally exploding under the enormous pressure. The Japanese, in turn, endure outbursts from the maddened foreigner and thus a curious equilibrium is maintained.

Torry says that the thing he most fears is ending up either a talented failure or a "designing machine like Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons". Push him a bit further and he points to the guitar that he bought recently. "In ten years time," he says, "I'm as likely to be doing *that* as anything else." KIM BOWEN





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CONTROL

Alan Yentob has the look of someone vaguely famous. A whiz kid chef, perhaps, or a regular fixture in ads for Piat D'Or. Not quite etched on your memory, but recalled at its blurry periphery. Similarly the initial impression on meeting him is of a slightly awkward interloper, someone who's chanced upon an office at the BBC and half-expects to be thrown out the minute its real occupancy arrives.

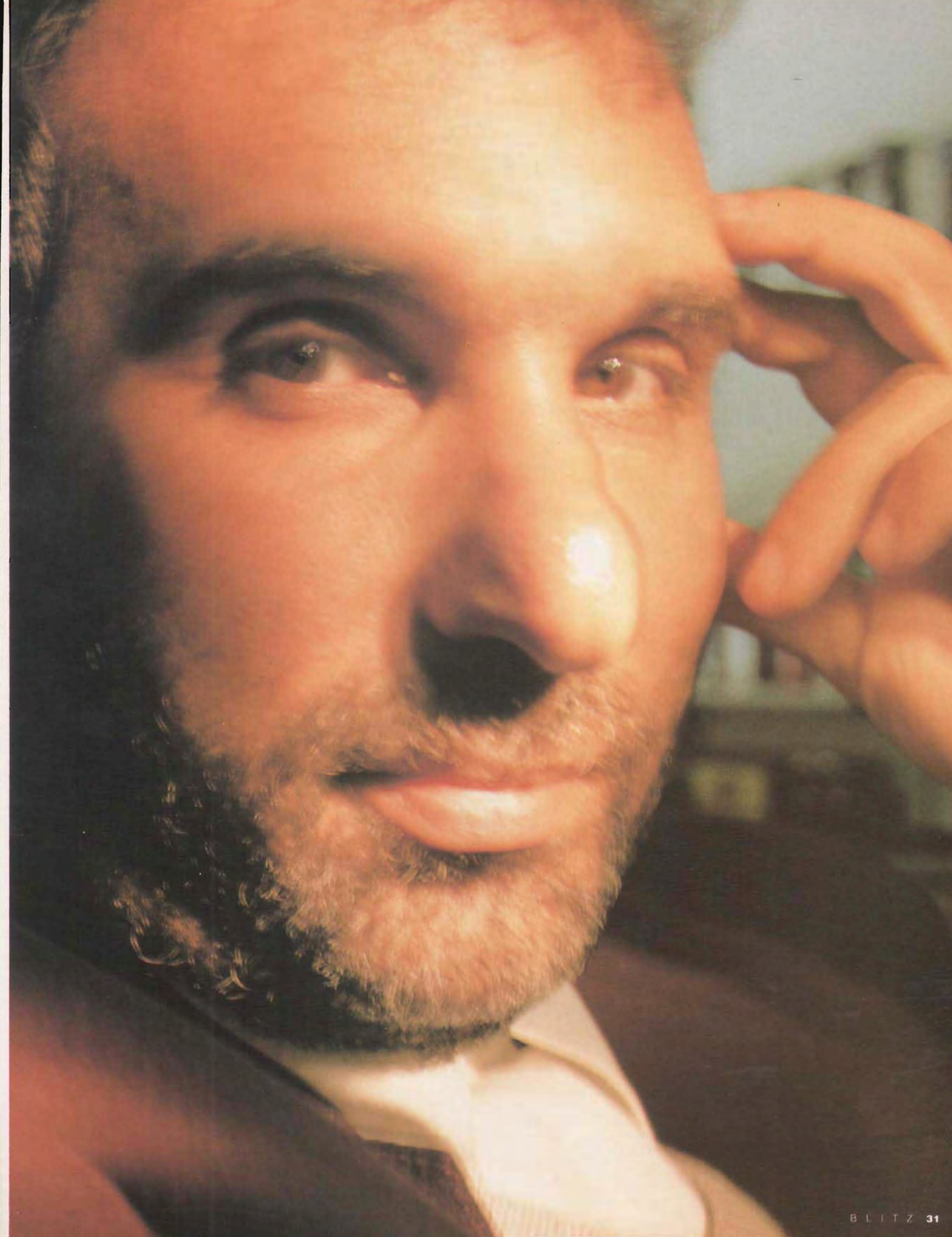
control

First impressions are, inevitably, deceptive. He welcomes this interviewer, dawdles over a few monosyllabic phone calls, then sprawls on a couch immediately behind me – a gesture that, if not calculated, still achieves a disorientating effect. As controller of BBC2, he has obviously learnt a few important lessons in managerial and social one-upmanship.

He tosses an overly casual "ask me anything you like" into the arena, not so much a carte blanche as a sackful of disparate road maps. Where do you begin? With the future of BBC2? With a breezy, "What's it like to be under 100 and in charge of the gardening programmes? Ever goosed ▶

Alan Yentob has famous friends,
an impressive pedigree and a
desire to open up the boundaries
of TV arts coverage. He is the
Controller of BBC2.

INTERVIEW PAUL MATHUR PHOTOGRAPHS STEVE SPELLER



Joan Bakewell? Where *did* you get that beard?" Or, limply, with...

What do you do exactly?

"As controller, I see my job as one of giving a coherent shape to BBC2, making sure everything comes together, building on what I was initially presented with."

Which was?

"A channel with enormous potential, at that time not completely realised."

Yentob took the reins on January 1st, 1988, but he'd been hanging around the stables for over twenty years. Indeed, his puckish determination might have marked him for this role since birth.



"There have been some problems defining when an arts story becomes a news story — with the whole Rushdie situation, for example. I think it's tremendously healthy that the news team are fighting at editorial meetings for arts stories."

Born in London in 1947, the son of World War II Iraqi refugee parents, Yentob grew up in Manchester in an environment of high expectations. His twin brother Robert has been quoted as saying, "There was always the feeling that if there was another pogrom, you should have something to fall back on."

Educated at the Cathedral School in Ely, a predominantly gentile world, young Yentob soon became aware of being different from those around him. It was an attitude he carried with him to a law degree at Leeds University, where he threw himself into producing drama, dissatisfied at the education-equals-job-prospect concerns of his peers. After Leeds he decamped to the University of Grenoble where he studied French literature and painted, before returning to England for his initiation into the BBC.

Working initially in the External Services department of BBC radio, he made his mark from the start, producing his own programme at 20 and interviewing the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The move to television was inevitable and came only a year later when he joined the arts features section as an assistant director in Drama Productions, moving before long to director of the weekly arts magazine *Review*. Great-grandfather of his current golden child, *The Late Show*, it signalled a bold step by the BBC into populist arts coverage, an impulse that resonates today.

"There's no way that the arts should be dealt with as an elitist ghetto, but that doesn't mean that they have to be trivialised. A lot of what I would like to see BBC2 do involves presenting the arts in a way that is both educational and entertaining."

In 1973, Yentob became producer/director of *Omnibus*, continuing to expand common preconceptions of the arts agenda. Two of the most notable presentations came from opposite ends of the artistic spectrum, one a drama-documentary about French film director Claude Chabrol, the other a verité look at David Bowie — *Cracked Actor*. Yentob's talent was already clear; an ability to give a documentary the lofty BBC sign of approval whilst communicating the innate enthusiasm of a fan. If

Yentob is to be remembered as giving anything to the British Broadcasting Corporation, it should be Energy.

The energetic approach continued in 1978 when he created *Arena*, an arts slot that encompassed a wide array of subject matter, from traditional profiles like that of Billie Holiday, to more quirky observations on the private life of the Ford Cortina and a documentary on the Chelsea Hotel. During this period he was at his most pugnacious, an apocryphal and apparently typical tale being that surrounding the *Arena* Orson Welles profile. It was scheduled for an hour, but Yentob, on editing, discovered he had over two hours of footage. Rather than trim it, and with the *Radio Times* schedule to be printed the next day, he went over the head of his

immediate boss and phoned the controller to ask for a longer running time. His persistence and pragmatism paid off. He got it.

Yentob usually gets his own way, even if it involves a persuasive power far removed from the typical go-getting careerist. Mel Brooks, who was the subject of an *Arena* profile, has articulated Yentob's approach as one of controlled passivity.

"You feel sorry for him because he doesn't dress well, and he looks up at you with pleading eyes. You offer to give him two days of your

time, and next thing you know, you have to give him your life before he'll go away."

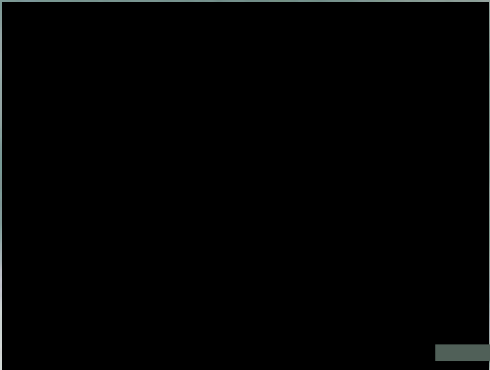
The Brooks programme demonstrated the qualities in Yentob that can be both irritating and endearing. Yentob spent much of the time onscreen, the programme being as much about his quest for an interview as about Brooks' talents. A part of him appears to enjoy encroaching into the performer's territory, to assert his involvement to the extent of actually appearing. "This is me," he says. "I did this."

When Yentob was made controller of BBC2 it seemed as if he would be frustrated with his new role, moving away from the spotlight and behind the scenes. After all, his greatest friends seem to be performers — like "Dawn, Lenny and Jennifer", whom he name-drops during the interview. He doesn't seem, well, stuffy enough to be a Beeb figurehead. He's far younger than his predecessor Graeme McDonald, and hardly in the traditionally Reithian mould.

"It's rather outdated to look at the role of the BBC2 controller in that way," Yentob asserts. "Some of the Reithian values still hold true, indeed increasingly so in the face of deregulation. It's important for the BBC to be a cornerstone, to have integrity and honesty. In many ways, it's more independent than any other broadcasting organisation because it doesn't have to consider advertising. We have a budget of £154 million at BBC2 and we can utilise the talents of independent programme-makers. There's a lot of scope here."

By 1992, the BBC is committed to farming out some 25 percent of its programmes to independent programme-makers, a move that should see plenty of healthy changes (unless, of course, the independently produced BRITS awards are a sign of things to come). Yentob is fully optimistic about such a development, but believes that the new face of BBC2 may already be perceived.

Of course things like gardening and snooker are important — the BBC2 live broadcast of the 1985 British Open snooker final between Steve Davis and Dennis Taylor attracted 18 million viewers, BBC TV's biggest ever



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"Over the last ten years, BBC2 has created an environment where new ideas can be taken on board and talents can be utilised. What you're seeing now is just the start."

► after-midnight audience and BBC2's biggest audience for any programme. But the channel's current pioneering stance comes in its commitment to the arts, most notably comedy, youth culture and, for want of a better phrase, the dinner-party agenda of *The Late Show*, *Arena* et al.

"I'm very proud of the way that BBC2 can accommodate new comedy talent. And as for programmes like *Snub*, *Reportage* and *Open To Question*, I think we're leading the field."

At this point, almost spookily on cue, Yentob's secretary bursts in to inform him that Mick Jagger is on the phone. Yentob exchanges a few pleasantries with Jagger about mutual friends before agreeing to be involved in an idea Jagger has for a programme. Yentob's money would certainly seem to be where his mouth is.

"The problem with BBC2 in the past has largely been one of marketing, of a public face. You must have noticed by now that we've changed the graphics for things like previews, made them more accessible to a younger market. After all, we're offering the kind of spread of programmes for that audience that they aren't going to find anywhere else. BBC2 isn't simply a minority channel anymore."

Effusive as he is about the talents of Janet Street-Porter and the programmes for which she has been responsible, Yentob's golden child is *The Late Show*, the nightly arts review that sees a return to the format of the old *Late Night Line-Up*, but imbued with a contemporary energy. It's certainly been even more successful so far than even he could have imagined, bolstered no doubt by events like the Rushdie affair, wherein an ostensibly arts-related topic becomes part of the public domain. (One of Rushdie's last public appearances was on *The Late Show*. His last public appearance was in the back of Yentob's car, whisked away from a memorial service for Bruce Chatwin on the day that the Ayatollah's death threat was announced). It has also presented him with some problems regarding the relationship between news and the arts, a sticky subject since the News and Current Affairs department is the only area of BBC2 outside his jurisdiction.

"There have been some problems defining when an arts story becomes a news story, with for example the whole Rushdie situation and also the Dali obituary. There have been occasions when we have either doubled up on stories covered by *Newsnight* (which immediately precedes *The Late Show's* 11.15pm slot), but those things are being ironed out. Whatever happens, I think it's tremendously healthy that, for the first time in years, the news team are fighting at editorial meetings for arts stories. There can't be anything wrong with that."

The BBC's image is undoubtedly changing, due mainly to the influence of Yentob and his opposite number at BBC1, Jonathan Powell. Both are young (Yentob is 42), both possess fairly liberal views on life, both are loosely members of a like-minded coterie at the BBC that is known by some as The Muesli Bunch. However, they are far from being stripped-pine elitists. Both espouse a basically populist approach – *EastEnders* and *Wogan* are cited as triumphs, and Michael Grade's legacy is seen as a healthy one

"I was obviously surprised when Michael left – I think everybody was – but thankfully he left the BBC with something good to build on."

Is there a competition or a collusion between BBC1 and BBC2?

"A bit of both, but ultimately we can grow together. With things like comedy, I see nothing wrong with developing them on BBC2 and then letting them go to BBC1. For example, later in the year, Victoria Wood is going to BBC1. That's a scoop for you."

"Also, within the programming schedule, there's an opportunity for BBC2 to look at things on a wider scale, to deal with subjects in a different way. We're going to be addressing issues like the environment, with a whole series of programmes looking at different aspects of the world we live in. And a major anthropological series which I think will interest a lot of people. I'm very excited about it all."

Now that Grade is controlling Channel 4, what is it like to be in competition with your mentor?

"Again, I don't really see it as competition. Channel 4 has a different agenda to that of BBC2. It has its own strengths and definitely needs to be there. The arrival of satellite TV will only emphasise that. It's tremendously important for television as a whole. What I believe in more than anything else is good television."

Despite vague claims otherwise, BBC2 seems far from backward in coming forward to address the nature of deregulated TV. Clive James' *Saturday Night Clive* show survives on its debunking of the state of the forthcoming dross, and numerous editions of *The Late Show* have taken the piss out of Murdoch's "revolution". The threat is obviously a real one.

"I don't think satellite TV is a threat to BBC1, BBC2 or Channel 4, although admittedly it may affect ITV. The important thing to remember is that satellite will not take audiences away from those channels, and indeed it may help us focus more clearly on our strengths. The future of BBC2 looks very strong indeed."

Are you comfortable with your role? Is this the end of the rainbow?

"I like what I do simply because it's an extension of what I've always done. There's a lot of like-minded people here."

Do you need the presence of a 1978-Yentob, someone who'll fight for things?

"They're already here and I'll encourage them. I think over the last ten years, BBC2 has created an environment where new ideas can be taken on board and talents can be utilised. What you're seeing now with BBC2 is just the start. There's still a lot more to come."

One of the most notable new programmes to come will be the John Sessions solo-improvisational series, recorded at the Donmar Warehouse and giving Sessions a chance to expand on the stream-of-consciousness comedy he demonstrated during *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* *Whose Line* is obviously the sort of show that Yentob would have liked to bring to BBC2, and Channel 4's swiftness in signing it for TV rankles even more since the show was originally on BBC radio.

"That happened before I was appointed. I'm sure if I'd been doing then what I do now, I'd have fought a bit harder for it. It was easy to see how successful it would be."

A couple of days after the interview, at a reception for the Channel 4 Spring season, the preview tapes were substantially delayed. As the gathered hacks grew restless and the executives desperately tried to explain what was going on, Michael Grade quipped, "You know who's behind all this? Alan Yentob. I bet he's running down Oxford Street this very moment with all our tapes under his arm."

In the grudging sub-structure of TV, that is the closest Yentob is getting to a tribute from his peers. For now.

"I really don't know what I'd do if I wasn't doing this. It's hard work, but the satisfaction, the chance to be part of great television. That's what's important. I love it."



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An exhibition of Gilbert and George's new work opens in April

INTERVIEW JOHN HIND PHOTOGRAPHS STEVE DOUBLE

"We are naive country boys who believe in doing something simple in life," proposes Gilbert, who has not had a surname – and certainly not lived in the countryside – since some point in 1968. It was in that year that he exhibited six ramshackle sculptures at Frank's Sandwich Bar, London W1, with his subsequent life's colleague, George.

Prior to 1968, the lives of Gilbert & George are shrouded in secrecy, or a lack of memory. The only clues are this reference to the countryside – Gilbert was born in the Italian Dolomites, George in Devon – a brief mention by George of teenage masturbation whilst riding a bicycle, and the perfunctory checklist of their academic record printed in two of their epic and thought-inspiring exhibition catalogues.

"What art education did for us is persuade us never to look at an art book again," Gilbert reflects. George adds: "If we were art teachers – which we wouldn't be – the first thing we would say is to chuck them all out of the window. All these young artists are being told what to look at, and being told they aren't as good as dead Italian people, dead artists... They should look at life, and find and accept *themselves* so that they can go forward."

For Gilbert & George, that step forward began in unison, with four legs – "democratically, and in friendship". For the last twenty odd – very odd – years, Gilbert & George have been brothers by different parents, united under the interconnected banners of Depression and Progression, which together they know as Art... although they would rather people not call it that ("we would be very upset").

A writer named Wolf Jahn, however, calls it just that in his extraordinary new book, *The Art Of Gilbert & George*, published in April by Thames & Hudson and coinciding with an exhibition of new work at the Anthony d'Offay gallery in London. Like all books about them, this is subsidised from the duo's own wallets, and attempts to make philosophical and structural sense of their twenty productive years together. As Wolf Jahn sees it, Gilbert & George's 'career' together has developed quasi-religiously from their formulation of themselves as "empty living sculptures", indifferent to the world. In their life and work they have passed symbolically – and

often literally – through downfall, bondage, alcoholism, self-destruction, blood-letting, exorcism and so on. This passage has climaxed in a sort of regeneration which has brought a new plentiful vision and acceptance of the natural order and movement of life, yet one into which they nevertheless inject "new qualitative standards". "All we are interested in," notes George, "is *feeling the world*."

As they readily acknowledge, their real spiritual low-point came in 1975, with what they refer to as their 'Great Drunken Disaster'. But surely the success they have experienced since, and their increased understanding of good and bad in the world, has made them happier people?

"We have no sense of happiness whatsoever," George explains. "We're probably more unhappy now, because we really know our own life."

"Now," Gilbert elaborates, "I would describe ourselves as floating. The misery of 1975 was more down to Earth. But now it has become like an abstract circle of thought."

But aren't you happier inside somewhere when you've completed a collection of photo-pieces, if only just to have got it out of your system?

"It just gives us a bigger hunger," says George. "In fact, at first, after all that concentration, we are exhausted, *drained*. Sometimes we finish in the studio and take a walk in the city and we don't know what the hell is going on... all the buses, the noise... we are like zombies."

"There is no such thing as being happy," adds Gilbert. "And *we* are more disturbed than most people."

Followers of the duo will remember their 1969 'magazine sculpture' for an arts journal, which contained a rare image of them smiling, and wearing cut-out letters pinned to their jackets exclaiming: GEORGE THE CUNT and GILBERT THE SHIT.

"That idea is still alive today," exclaims Gilbert in 1989. "Don't you think, George?"

"It was very prophetic," George agrees. "It showed we wanted to be abused... and we still are."

Have there been any critical reactions to their work which they positively wished they *hadn't* garnered?

"No!" exclaims George, "because we believe our

work is a democratic form. We say it is there for the viewer to consider in the light of his own life. We open the doors *completely*. And we seem to bring out the bigot in the liberal and the liberal in the bigot."

Whereas they used to have "three social friends", they now claim to have "only one", despite the scores of "very charming" male models who pass through their studio to be photographed. If someone arrives unannounced at the door of their Spitalfields home, "we don't answer", and they claim that, at the openings of their exhibitions, people rarely make contact with them.

"At the Hayward Show in 1987, *nobody* spoke to us!" exclaims George.

Is it because they find the duo threatening? George answers only with a further question: "Any more than we find *them* threatening?"

What of contact with the patrons and collectors who buy their mammoth, one-off photo-pieces? "We maybe say 'Hello' to a couple of them."

Because Gilbert & George's work is seen as so politically contentious in their home country (they are far more successful in Europe), and also because "our large galleries show only senior and *dead* artists", the duo do not expect another major public show in London for ten years. However, the work they have completed since the Hayward show two years ago goes on exhibition for a month at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery in London on April 20th. The entire takings from the subsequent sale of this work – upwards of £500,000 is expected – will be donated to the charity CRUSAID.

"We wanted to do something completely positive," says Gilbert. "To make the topic more open, and to give money because they are the underdogs."

Is it fair to ask whether the images relate specifically to AIDS? "Not specifically," says George. "But we never did exclude AIDS from our work. In fact a person once told us he sees AIDS in *all* our pictures... The whole of life is AIDS."

"Our new work is... beautiful," offers Gilbert. "It's...unhappy... sexy... It's lots of things. It's just a progression."

There were two or three things which happened that made me realise I had to get away. Away from the ceaseless last ever interviews with Roy Orbison, away from Ronnie Reagan's goodbye wave, away from worrying about whether there were any insects in Eden before the snake, away from discussing with my neighbour the prospect of living out the rest of our lives as nothing more than universal solipsists.

Usually, being English – delightfully lazy and a great opponent of anything strenuous – I would just have gone to bed and done nothing for a few days. Not quite nothing – I would eat sandwiches, and blocks of chocolate. But I would have applied myself to do as close to nothing as it is possible to do for anyone who remains alive.

At times like this you fight hard so that your boredom acquires a mystical dignity. You even flirt with the possibility of allowing your boredom to become your faith, to become the absolute sensation that is religion. You go to bed with your copy of the latest *Hello!* magazine, Al Alvarez's *The Savage God*, and a cassette that has nothing on it but 'Boredom' by the Buzzcocks.

This time, however, to be solidly occupied with doing nothing was not enough. I had to get *away*. Beyond boredom, beyond the living room, out into the physical world where adventures happen and lives change. The American writer PJ O'Rourke had told me that after a while you can't keep on making fun out of people you see on television, that you had to be something more than a doomed coward, and go out and observe new and strange relationships between man and his

There are
four ways to
visit a place
like Thailand...

thai-sick

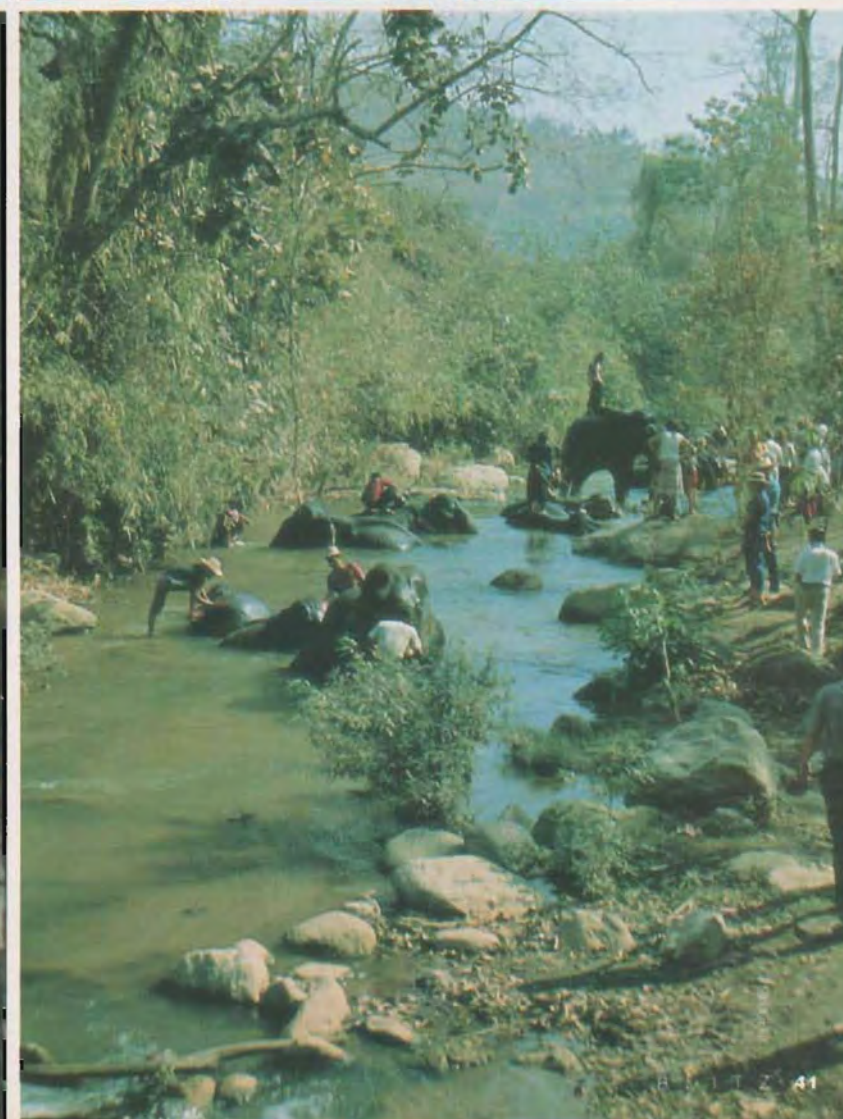
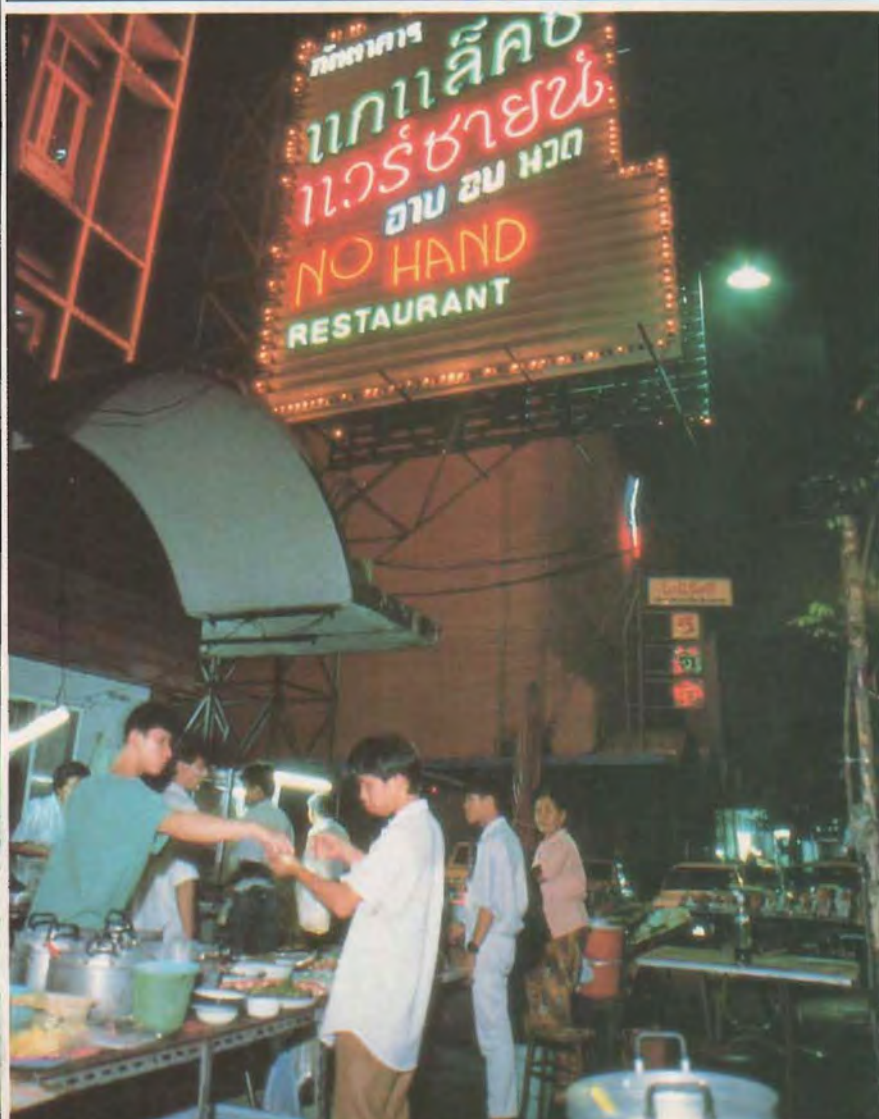
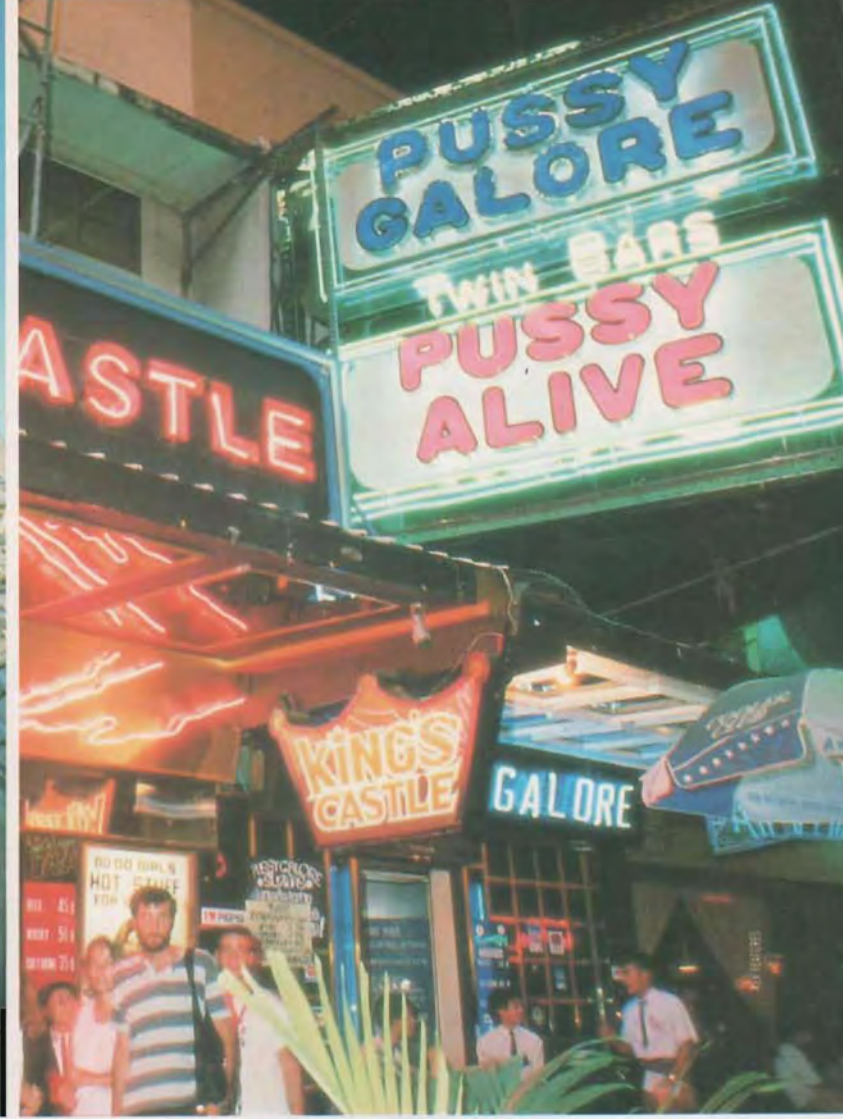
REPORT PAUL MORLEY

geographical setting. That's what he said and I believed him.

What he meant was that, in its raw state, before it's processed and shaped for sophisticated passive consumption, everything that happens in reality is just one long mishap. It's even easier to make fun of than TV and trivia. You just have to get on an airplane, and it's funny, in a terrible way. Like someone hammering at your funnybone. Belt yourself in on an aircraft and you just giggle, it's so obvious what's going to happen – you're either going to die, or live and have to go through it all over again.

I've been told, by some pop star who was spending his royalties on flying lessons, that the first thirty seconds of the plane's take-off are the most crucial. Now, every time I take off, there is an intense period while I count to thirty and try to keep busy by reading Terry Wogan in the in-flight magazine talking about the golf courses of Portugal. Imagine – you've just counted to twenty-two, Wogan has three-putted, and that's the end of your life. The relief comes when you reach the end of the Wogan article, turn to the one by Cliff Michelmore, and suddenly realise that you've already counted to seventy-six and can still think for yourself. Then you can just wonder how funny things are going to be when you get off the plane.

Before I could get on a plane, I had to decide where to go. I had to get away. Where? The golf courses of Portugal? Manchester? I flicked through a back issue of *Hello!*, and that week's Wonder of the World was Thailand. Only a few hours before, someone had been telling me ▶



► how Thailand was the in-place to visit. Once it was Bournemouth, then it was Barcelona, and now it was Bangkok. "Ibiza with heroin," he called it, grinning mysteriously. The thought of this, and of bumping into people

thailand

who are usually spotted playing a small part in TV commercials for tortilla chips, didn't put me off. So I went. Then I came home.

And then I forgot all about it, the way you do, until you look at the photographs, or you're waiting for a train, or you get to thinking again – and have to get away. It wasn't until I watched *Holiday '89* one week, rolling around Thailand, and the places I'd been and seen, with the cosy and disturbingly controlled Desmond Lynam, that I realised that there are two Thailands. There's the one which you see when you win a competition and that you read about in the magazines – the Venice of the East, *The King And I*, the glittering temples, the historic palaces, the simple villages, the floating markets; the one which you drift through with tasteless Western superiority. And then there's the Thailand that's out of your reach, that's out of synch, something that's drained off all the things we think of as advantages, an old world of wretchedness and survival that's just beginning to be surprised by electronic and labelled Western interference.

There are a number of ways to visit a place like this. One, learn how to live there. Two, visit as a serious tourist, dead keen to respect the intricacies of life and feeling, something you should go on a training course to prepare for. Three, pop along as a silly tourist, ticking off the places you've seen with hard-earned insensitivity. Four, panic.

I tried number four, which is actually more honourable than you might think. It happens when you think about things too much to just tour, but don't know enough to really have a clue what's going on. It's when you're too romantic and hopeful to want it to be like an exotic Disneyland catering for all your cute little whims, but not brave enough to want to get lost. It was watching Des Lynam trot around the country that reminded me of the punishing tourist trap I ended up in. More specifically, it was when Lynam visited the village of the Meo tribespeople that I suffered a lurid flashback.

Reporting from the screen, Des seemed to be having a relaxed and eye-opening time, wandering casually through the shabby, skewed Meo village perched high up on a hillside in the north of Thailand, just south of Burma. How quaint, you might have thought, watching Des looking like a king as he wandered through the abject village, pestered by filthy urchins entreating him to crush them with his pride, hoping to sell him some tourist-clean versions of the rags they were wearing. But I had been to that village, and I knew what Des must have gone through if he has just a bit of sensitivity about him. Des looked as if he'd just strolled into the village from Wimbledon. But as he said something soothing and witty in the middle of this muddy, disembowelled devilish fairground attraction – a settlement of mounds, canopies and loosely assembled wooden huts – I noticed a tribesman standing a few paces behind Des, as if in submission.

I recognised him, and I recognised the skeletal dog urinating on the same pair of prodigiously grimy brown flairs, and I remembered that strange expression, as he stared long and hard at the man in the well-pressed cotton trousers. An expression that was all of aggressive, curious, resigned, lustful, hopeful, bland. I was there, I met that man, and I nearly died, there and then, of panic. I was there, in that place, one of the living villages the guides tell you to go to. And if you're silly enough, or keen enough, you make your way up the dirt track that comes off the main mountain road, paying a few pence for the undoubted privilege

of checking out – for as many minutes as you can stand – the conditions of life. Filth, disorder, mire, rubbish, dung, urine, pus, secretions, sweat... everything the West does its best to disclaim, set on a hillside that money can take you to. A packet of poverty and a kiss-me-quick hat.

And of course, this *isn't* how it is, not in their eyes, in their mind. This is just the visitor making *his* mind up to be confused and ashamed, culturally self-centred, encoding their material poverty in his own system of meaning. The tourists enter the Meo village as if they are getting a fun-ride – excited, offended, alarmed. And the tribespeople find a few

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ways to exploit their visitors, and are perhaps more entertained by the tourists than the tourists are by them.

The tribesman, who hovered near the cavalier Des – grave but obviously with mischief on his mind – had looked at me in exactly the same way. I knew what Des must have gone through, he must have nearly died, there and then. Standing by the stall (as inviting as the toilets at Crewe Alexandra) that sold fizzy drinks, watched over by a naked three-year-old with a nose so snotty you could glue it to the ground, a few yards away from a couple of cavorting baby pigs that could just as well have been giant rats.

The last thing Des and I would have seen would have been a couple of diseased dogs, copulating for the hell of it. We could have died, there and then.

PART TWO

A few tips on passing through an alien physical world in the name of *getting away*. First of all, look after yourself. This means, spend money on yourself. Never fly to Thailand on Aeroflot.

If you've got a ticket on Aeroflot, you'll put on a brave face. You'll resent the snorts of pity that greet your news that you're flying Aeroflot, putting it down to dull and old-fashioned anti-Russian ignorance. The only people who make fun of Aeroflot flights are people who've never flown on the airline. That's what you think, as you stare nervously at the Aeroflot ticket. You're wrong. People who fly Aeroflot just don't like to talk about their experiences. Some even have hypnosis to get over it.

Actually, the flight to Moscow was comparatively normal. I counted

to thirty, Wogan three-putted, and three hours later we landed in Moscow. I'd been led to believe that there was a three-hour wait in Moscow, and then, simply, a seven- or eight-hour flight on to Bangkok. I did the kind of things everyone does when they land in Moscow, like buy a Swatch watch at the airport shop, drink a couple of beers, and eat the packed sandwiches and Marks & Spencer Pot Au Chocolat that I'd taken with me.

If you fly out of Moscow airport, you don't get a boarding pass. You just hope you get a seat. I learned that the hard way. Stuck at the back of the queue for the connection flight, I was convinced that I would be stuck at Moscow airport for days, and that I'd run out of Marks & Spencer food... But using all my best English guile, I managed to get a seat, and I was so happy I thought I'd write the story of my life.

Count to thirty, Wogan's at the eighteenth, try and think of the title for the autobiography. Next stop, Bangkok, or so it seemed to me. A few hours later, we land. Outside is savage, desolate country that could possibly be Afghanistan. Or anywhere. A few people began to move around the plane, stretching their legs. I stayed where I was. My seat was too precious. An air stewardess, as sour and as obvious as the scriptwriters of *'Allo 'Allo* would imagine, glowered at me. "What are you still doing in your seat?" she snapped, as if that was the first question in a lengthy interrogation. I was puzzled, and then more or less dragged out of my seat and led out across the airfield into a concrete bunker, inside which a large bunch of human life breathed and sighed like they'd been there forever, and there was more to come. I was handed a voucher that entitled me to a tablespoonful of an awkward orange syrup.

With Sisyphean acceptance, I joined in with this outcast bunch of human life, breathing heavily, surrounded by fairytale grey, staring out

People who fly Aeroflot don't like to talk about their experiences. Some even have hypnosis to get over it.

of the bunker past our waiting plane into a bombed-out wilderness. I was lost. I had been laid to rest in a grave place that was something like a cross between a prison camp and a motorway service station. Right now there are probably people still waiting in this gloom station, silently wondering if they'll ever again see colour, or their own reflection.

Some men with machine guns and menacing manners strode towards me, and I thought that I was about to be asked to carry a sack of potatoes out to the mountains in the distance, and then come back to pick up another sack. Or maybe they were going to force me to drink my orange syrup. Instead, they put me back into my seat. I was so happy I thought I'd write the story of the air stewardess's life. Next, Bangkok? No.

I think we took off and landed four times before we arrived in an airport that wasn't surrounded by a bombed wilderness. During one journey between nowhere and nowhere else, my vegetarian meal was rice and peas. For the next journey, it was peas. The next, it was rice. Then we landed in Pakistan. I decided to call the book I was writing about the pilot's life *Twenty-four Minutes In Karachi*.

We took off for the seventh time, and by then I had begun to dream that I was on my way home. Landing in Delhi reminded me that I was still going somewhere. I had a cup of coffee in Delhi Airport, and giddily anticipated where I would end up next. Kuwait? Cyprus? Tasmania?

Maybe back to Moscow, to start all over again. Back in my seat, which was now my home, I sobbed with myself to remember that I once had a life of my own. When the plane took off from Delhi, I was way beyond counting to thirty. I was hysterical. We had been flying for so long I had redecorated my seat twice, and built an extension. We landed in Bangkok. I was so happy I offered to write the life story of everybody on the plane.

PART THREE

The first thing I did in Bangkok was make sure I was coming back on Lufthansa. The second thing I did was disappear into my hotel room, and watch *Friday The 13th Part 7* on the in-house video, with my first taste of Singha beer. The third thing – a haircut. If you want to know about the time and the place of a city, ask a barber. I figure it's going to take about fifteen minutes, but I miss the point. I am not merely having a haircut, I am being *looked after*. After two hours of being looked after, I have come back to life after my slow, sudden Aeroflot death.

As the barber gently deals with my hair, and begins his story of Bangkok, city of the future but a place of the past, a young girl tenderly treats me to a lingering manicure, dedicating minutes of her life to my miserable nails. She then wants to tamper with my toenails, but I blush at the thought. I'm pushed back flat, and my ears are expertly cleaned out, and my thighs are being electronically massaged, and what seems like hundreds of hands are stroking my forehead, and I just can't help it, I swoon with delight. Then, just when I think I can't bear for this to stop, it stops. Now that was a haircut. In Bangkok, you can be looked after better than any other city in the world.

You want pleasure, suggested my barber. I grinned noncommittally. Just give me the facts. OK, he said, smiling like they do in Thai, as if they really are giving you exactly what you want, when really you're getting something of what you want, and something else, which might be anything.

"Although Bangkok is afflicted with all the problems of an overdeveloped metropolis in an underdeveloped country," he began to intone as he snapped the electronic massager round my neck, "it has begun to establish itself as one of the capital cities of the 21st century, the latest in that honour roll of multinational megadollar Asian successes that already includes Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore and Seoul. Buddhist capital and Sin City! Crazy, busy, precarious, flirtatious!"

It was a start. I asked for some advice. Never, he said, touch a Thai on the head. We are such gentle people! He seemed, approximately, to mean it. And never ever touch them anywhere with your left hand, or point at them with your left hand. This is as rude as pointing the soles of your feet at an image of Buddha. They assume that you use your left hand for washing yourself after defecation. You know, I joked to the barber, I write with my left hand – does that make me a shit writer? He just stared at me, and started to massage the soles of my feet, touching me with his left hand. I was, I suppose, so important that he had to serve me however he could, and so inferior that it didn't matter if he touched me with the hand that he used to wash himself after defecating. Or maybe he was a modern kind of Thai guy, who did what he wanted with his left hand.

"Did you know," he said quietly, and with the strong subtlety of the Thai people that I could never quite get, "that Emmanuelle said that Bangkok was a place where doing nothing is an art! Aaah... you too are addicted to *sanuk*."

Pardon?

"Fun. If all life is suffering, as the Lord Buddha suggests, why not make the most of the moment? Why feel guilt over the delicious pleasures that do not harm a soul?"

► He had a point. He had the top of my thighs gripped in his massager. He pointed out, with his left hand, some of the places I should visit that night. Buddha was embedded in the city, and it didn't look like

Thailand

any of the people in the city would harm a Russian stewardess, but he told me about a place where the girls would happily pull out forty bells on a string from inside their vagina to the music of Status Quo. I guess I was out in the physical world where adventures happen and lives change.

I took one of the city's 7,400 *tuk tuks* deep into the Patpong district. These are Bangkok's taxis – motorised rickshaws that resemble souped-up three-wheeler prams driven by the local equivalents of a Chelsea fan, or their grandfather. How do I know there are 7,400 *tuk tuks* in Bangkok? I stood in the streets and counted them. The barber called the critical careering on the streets of Bangkok – I counted well over a million vehicles racing for space and chasing in circles – 'Bangkok roulette'. Thirty-five thousand vehicles join the chaos every year. I know – I asked. I also found out how to deal with a *tuk tuk* driver.

A helpful tip I picked up is the rule of bartering with the driver before you get in. There is no meter. Wherever you are going in the city, they will ask for fifty *baht* (about sixty pence). You will offer thirty *baht*, and you will usually settle on forty. The whole deal can take less than half a second, and both parties must smile at all times. After going through this ritual ten times during an hour, you're quickly tempted to offer them one hundred *baht*, as they smile and stick up five fingers to denote fifty *baht*. To do this is as stupid as flying Aeroflot. Never alter the plan. Never, ever confuse a Thai. It takes a day to untangle the mess, and the look on their faces as they half-realise that you are teasing them will break your heart.

The plan is – he says fifty, you say thirty, we all say forty, and smile. If your *tuk tuk* topples over in the usual heated race to beat the lights, or turn the corner, or overtake a Mercedes, do not lose your temper. As you lie in the road, pinned down by your gaily coloured *tuk tuk* with the furry dice hanging from the roof, slightly bleeding from the mouth, do not be surprised if the driver still expects his forty *baht*. Simply smile, give him the money, and prove that you understand Thailand by demonstrating uncanny nonchalance and speaking the important words, 'Mai pen rai.' Never mind. Remember this also when you buy a cassette of the latest New Order LP that costs you 20p, but which – when you play it – begins with the sound of a needle being dropped onto a record. 'Mai pen rai.'

I counted 1,500 all but legitimate houses of prostitution, 13 go-go bars called The Pink Panther, and 250,000 dancing girls, hostesses and masseuses. Inside one of the bars, on a silver ramp under thousands of coloured lightbulbs, surrounded by drinking tourists quickly used to the absolute soft-porn lack of tension, groups of teen girls in stilletoes grip hold of metal posts and self-mockingly move their legs a little bit to the soft-porn Stock-Aitken-Waterman soundtrack. The girls who stand near the front of the ramp are more brazen, and sneer insolently, occasionally hugging hard the metal posts, and grinning at each other.

This is easy work, superficial stuff for the meeker tourist. At the back, chubbier girls in larger bikinis still fret with innocence, and can't quite get the hang of 'I Should Be So Lucky'. Each girl has a number, and in the interests of science, I soon find myself talking to number 27, and try to explain that she is the kind of girl who could easily nab a Tyson or a Stallone, or even a Jagger, and that she really shouldn't bump and grind to Rick Astley. No, she says, you don't understand, I earn £250

a month – a Thai fortune – I look down at the men who come to watch me, there are 200 VD clinics in Bangkok, and your five minutes are up.

Deeper into the night, it gets harder for a working girl. Number 27 at least wore a piece of stretchy material that ran between her legs and up the front of her body and down the middle of her back. In one bar, the girls have nothing but their stilletoes. Six of them bounce up and down to the music of the Rolling Stones, dripping hot candle wax onto their bodies. The visitors here are more hardened, and can barely be bothered to look as the girls appear to open bottles of coke with their arses. Live sex excites a certain kind of detached fascination. Five minutes, ten positions, the boy performing eight times a night, and he never lets the girl down. It's hard to believe that, like every Thai male, he once had to spend some time wearing the orange robes of the monks, and that somewhere in this bar there is probably a well-tended shrine.

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electronically massaged and
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hands are stroking my
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I leave as the girls start to insert fireworks into various orifices. It's possible to go even deeper into the night, where no one feels anything anymore and things can get really nasty, but I didn't want to know. I needed the tourist safety of a speeding *tuk tuk*, a candy-striped time machine that can whisk you away from the sex with vegetables, the slaves, the slums, rocking through the happy city to your five-star hotel. In the international bar, Thai yuppies watch the Thai girl quite covered in a frock sing 'New York, New York'.

The best hotel to stay at in Bangkok is The Oriental (48 Oriental Avenue; tel: 236 0400). It is expensive, not only in the Thai sense, but in the European sense. The cheapest room is over £100 a night, but it's a hotel that comes out of old Siam, and a place where you realise that *sanuk* cannot be crudely translated as just meaning fun – *sanuk* is, like most of the Thai expressions that might convey the state of the nation and the people, too strangely subtle to easily translate into English. *Sanuk*: an untranslatable Thai concept that implies an effortless but exact combination of spontaneity, elegance, good food, good taste, delightful companionship and, finally, and most importantly of all, fun.

Set beautifully by the Chao Phraya River, it's a real writers' hotel: those who have stayed there include Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham, Noël Coward, John Steinbeck, Ian Fleming, Tennessee Williams, Graham Greene, Gore Vidal, John Le Carré... you could even have the same room that Charles Aznavour stayed in, or Henry Kissinger. From one of its balconies, you might be able to see The Grand Palace, The Temple Of Dawn, and you can look out at the great river and see all of the life and soul of Bangkok – floating, paddling or motoring by – that you might want to see. You can do a lot of tourist ticking off just by staying a day or two at The Oriental.

Unfortunately, I didn't get to stay there. I stayed at a holidaymaking Sheraton Hotel, on the river, but nearer to the Patpong Road and the masseuses, to Silom Road and the silk shops and McDonalds. Right outside the hotel was the con market, selling the hissing tapes, the cheat Chanel, the £7 Rolex toy watches, the stallholders obsessed in their own

wicked, amazed way with the obsession that Westerners have for labels. Are they truly Buddhist, regarding all activity in this world of illusion as bad, and therefore condemning all snobberies out of hand, or are they just cheerfully joining in all the fun of the Western World's fair?

Fascinated by all the goods and bads of the prosperous world, its special effects, comforts and changes, the freakish quickness of its fashion, but not able to quite swallow it whole – the Thai people will end up even more comically consumerist than the Japanese. It's like they are making fun of greed, and just as the city moves as fast as one of the fastest-growing cities in Asia has to move, so there are the unmistakable signs of their own past pace, the unhurried rhythms, as if they can't quite believe the new money and sights of their charged progress. Forty years ago, there were perhaps ten millionaires in what was then a town. Now there are perhaps ten thousand. Watch their television for a few hours, and you can't miss the changes taking place. A Thai version of *The Price Is Right*, truly Japanese in its enthusiasm, is separated from an hour of monks chanting blessings by adverts for motorbikes, mouthwash and expensive brandy. Until recently nothing was allowed on television between certain hours in the early evening except for a photograph of their spiritual and temporal leader, King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

I bought a non-Rolux, went to the world's largest restaurant, and sailed down the great river, just like Des Lynam, just so. I must have been

**Never touch a Thai anywhere
with your left hand, or point
at them with your left
hand. This is as rude as
pointing the soles of your
feet at an image of Buddha.**

to Bangkok, and the next thing you do, just like Des, is travel to Chiang Mai, the second largest city in Thailand, with a population forty times smaller than Bangkok. A fifty-minute flight north, up towards the Golden Triangle where Burma, China and Thailand meet, this is where the tourist must go to tick off Elephant Ride, jungle trail, less-spoilt people. If Bangkok is Los Angeles turned inside out, frantic and serene, split apart by a shambolic Venice, then Chiang Mai is like a miniature Bombay crossed with Bath. It was a mistake to go there, and I nearly died of fright.

PART FOUR

The most mysterious and exotic place in the world should be your home. You might not feel that when you're having a haircut in Bangkok or charging up the Chao Phraya, but you certainly feel it after two days in Chiang Mai. The sensible thing would have been to have done what Des would have done, and flown down to the beaches of the south, Phuket, and Pattaya, Thailand's Miami Beach. All the flights out of Chiang Mai were booked for nine days. I couldn't get away. Thousands of you will never know the special unique feeling of being stuck in Chiang Mai, which soon felt like it was thirty-five miles south of nowhere, or possibly just east of one of the airports that the Aeroflot jet landed at.

Missing TV, magazines, the surprise of the new, I ended up singing 'My Way' and 'Imagine' in local bars, and reading Kenneth Williams' *Acid Drops*, the only book not written by Jeffrey Archer or Wilbur Smith that I could find in the bookshop. Skilled travellers will remind me about

the bookshop that pleases all the hippies who stopped their lives in Chiang Mai, but I only found that on the last day. On the sixth day, I watched Manchester United vs Liverpool on the television, appallingly grateful to be able to hear the wonderful voices of Martyn Tyler and Brian Moore just about discernible beneath the shrieking Thai commentary.

I fought long and hard to try to get a flight back to Bangkok, and because you're not supposed to lose your temper with the Thai people, who smile all the time and like life to be pleasing and who just cannot say no, I lost my temper. I went into most of the travel agents in the town, trying to explain to them how desperately I needed to get to Bangkok. They nodded and smiled at me, and I lost my temper because they couldn't understand, and I would storm out. The fact that every single travel agent I visited actually knew exactly what I wanted meant that by the eighth day, every time I walked down a street, travel agents would chase after me, waving plane tickets to Bangkok. On the seventh day I sang 'Stairway To Heaven' in a bar.

☑ Went on an elephant ride.

☑ Saw a hairless baby rat in my hotel room.

☑ Sat by the swimming pool.

☑ Took thirty-seven *tuk tuk* rides in one day.

☑ Sang 'Riders On The Storm' in a bar.

On the ninth day, I visited the Meo Tribe. I wandered through their village, vaguely wondering if the new Bangkok world of worlds would ever touch these people, and a man in disgusting brown trousers and with a sick little glint in his eyes invited me into his hut. Maybe he wanted me to sing 'My Way' with him, so I followed. He might have shrewdly sensed my tension, in a place where there is no tension, and he might have wanted to make me appreciate where I really was: a swarming, ordered world where you live and you die, and odd people from the outside come and stare at you. Had he noticed that I'd taken a picture of his village, and wanted paying? Next to this man I was, in one sense, incredibly rich, and you could have even defined me as sophisticated in comparison, but he looked far too crafty for me. Was he going to ask me exactly what were the advantages of roads, railways, water supply, sewers and cinemas? I took stock of the inside of his hut. A floor of beaten earth, a sleeping bench made of planks, rough matting, kitchen utensils consisting of old petrol drums and salvaged tins, oily rags, blind pigs, ancient dogs...

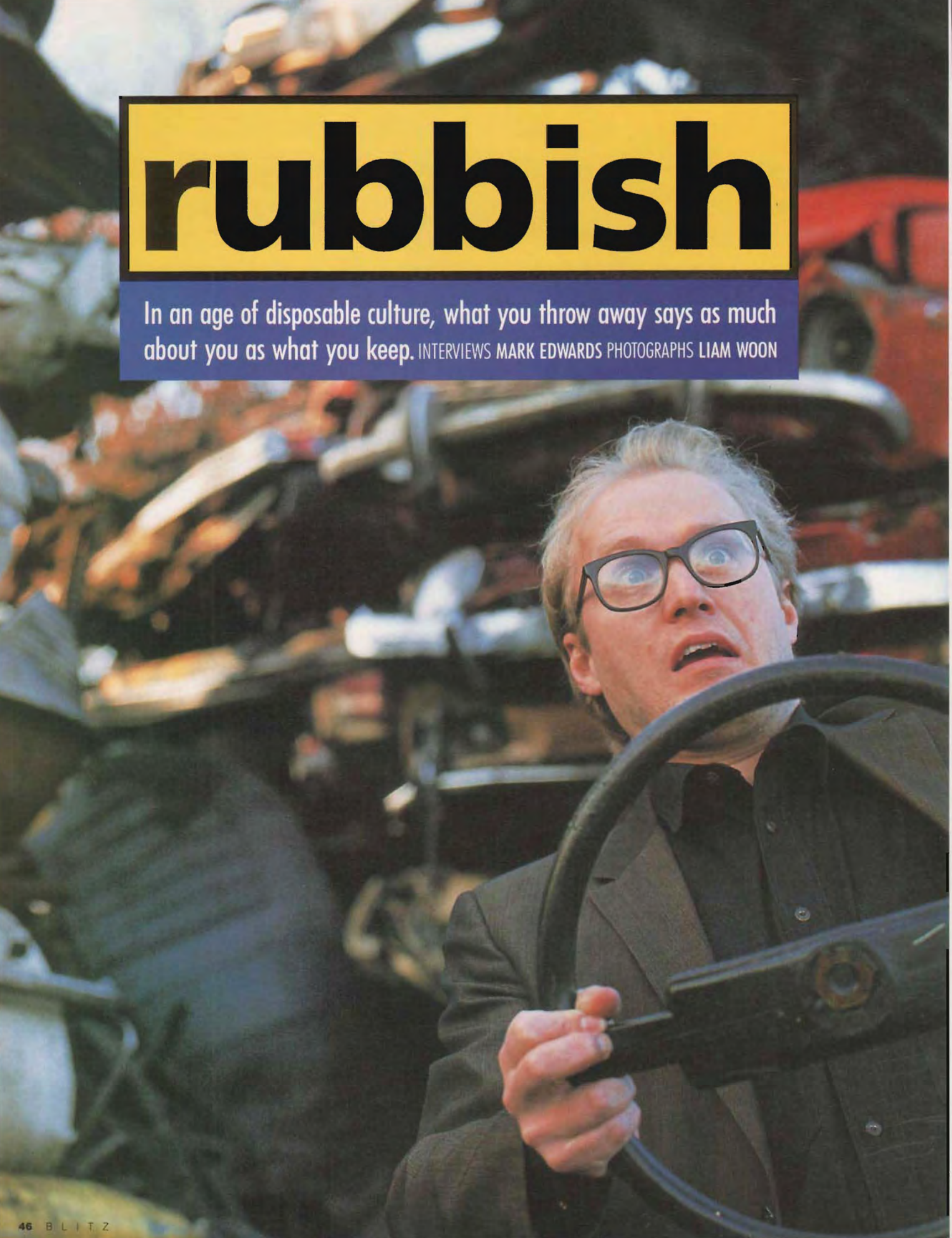
He clipped the door of the hut shut, which still allowed the pigs to scuffle underneath, and bent down to pick something out of a tin box. There was a delicate, sweet, grassy scent that was wonderfully soporific. Maybe I was going to get some tea, or even some kind of alcohol. He took out an opium pipe. I went as cold and damp as I imagine Des Lynam did, and I turned towards the door. Standing there was another man who was wearing a red satin bomber jacket, blue jeans with five-inch turn-ups, a baseball cap, mirrored sunglasses, Nike training shoes and a *Miami Vice* T-shirt. A hip Thai policeman. I was being framed! All I could think of was life imprisonment, or even just a life of community service in Chiang Mai.

The hip Thai policeman stared at me, the tribesman grinned from hell and offered me the pipe. I felt sick, and sure I was going to die. I backed out of the hut inch by inch, stumbling over grotty pigs, naked children and skinny dogs foaming at the mouth. I could have died there and then. I walked slowly back to my jeep, feeling the hip Thai policeman watching me every inch of the way. I drove back to my hotel, positive I was being followed, and picked up my twelve tickets to Bangkok. All the time, all I could think was – life imprisonment. Nothing else, until I arrived in Bangkok, and boarded my heavenly Lufthansa flight.

It took me thirty years to get to Thailand. It took me thirty seconds to fly home. As soon as I got back to my exotic home, I went to bed, and began my holiday.

rubbish

In an age of disposable culture, what you throw away says as much about you as what you keep. INTERVIEWS MARK EDWARDS PHOTOGRAPHS LIAM WOON





Adrian Edmondson adrian edmondson

"Virtually everything that's sent to me is put in the bin. A fair percentage of it is scripts. A bit heartbreaking really, as I never read them."

Adrian Edmondson bins his fan mail, too — traumatised no doubt by the fact that the one fan letter he ever wrote received no reply. Shame on you, Bill Wyman.

On the other hand, "I quite like reading junk mail. I'm thinking of doing all my Christmas shopping by junk mail."

Edmondson seems almost to make a point of keeping things most of us throw away and chucking things most of us treat with more respect. He once threw away a car.

"It was a Mark 1 Cortina, which I crashed. It's not that I threw it away exactly, but I left it outside so long that somebody nicked it and sold it for scrap. I'm a great collector of cars and engines. I wish I'd never thrown away any of my cars or bikes... well, sold them stupidly."

"The only real junk that I throw away is clothes, I suppose. Although I'm not really conscious of throwing them away; they just suddenly seem not to be there. And papers and magazines. Especially the Sundays. I suppose I think I'm going to read them, but we end up just using them for the dog."

"I've been saving *Hello!* magazine, though — they're very inspirational in terms of characters. And *The Field*, which I seem to have a subscription to. I keep them lying around because there's lots of pictures of guns and dead rabbits and they offend people."

Edmondson himself shoots an air rifle, and he saves all his lager cans as targets. Since he also saves brandy bottles ("nice shapes"), anyone going through his bin would come to the conclusion that he doesn't drink. "Very useful for insurance purposes."

He's moved house so many times that he's pretty ruthless about throwing stuff out. "I would like to be a hoarder, but... Oh, I have a lot of pieces of wood in my cellar. Well, there's always that time when you want a bit of wood... except that that time hasn't come yet."

Edmondson muses on the usefulness or otherwise of a cellarful of wood, and comes to an important conclusion. Nearly.

"I probably won't take them with me when I move house again... But there's some nice bits of wood too. No, maybe I *will* take them..."



paul smith

Paul Smith

Given the slightest encouragement, Paul Smith will get his winkies out and show them to you. Winkies are those novelty badges that switch from one image to another as you see them from different angles. And Paul Smith has a whole drawerful of them.

Smith doesn't throw rubbish away; he collects it. Although, sitting in an office full of what most people would term junk, you begin to think that it can't be that conscious a thing. Maybe the rubbish just walks in of its own accord. The sadly deserted wastebasket comes from Milan (naturally), and tips dangerously at an angle, almost as if it's crying out to be fed. But Smith has been busy snatching good nutritious junk from its elder brothers.

"I just found this in a rubbish bin down the road," he says with amazement as he throws a beautiful French-language art book, *Raphael Et L'Art Français*, onto the winkie-covered table. "Yesterday I found a brand new wine rack in a skip in Little Venice."

Smith can justify his hoarding instinct: winkies, pens, books, any number of things can find themselves transformed into a T-shirt design, a fabric print or a window display. But the enthusiasm with which Paul Smith (the man) opens up another Paul Smith (the shop) bag and unleashes a torrent of bubble-

gum toothpaste tubes and reclining nude nutcrackers reveals that what we have here is a grown-up kid playing with his toys. He is, after all, a member of the Dennis The Menace Club, secret sign and all. "It's a bit like being a mason," he says, holding up a plate of rubber spaghetti by its attached rubber fork.

One Mickey Mouse ruler later, and we're onto a collection of Forties and Fifties American ties. Smith gets three words into his description of them before his mind races ahead to the next treasure.

"These are all... Oh! Dead chicken!"

One dead chicken is followed by a false tongue, a plastic banana, a bag of thank-you letters, and a pen made up of \$2,000's worth of shredded US currency, when suddenly an employee pops his head up the spiral staircase that leads to Smith's top-floor playroom. A brief exchange follows concerning the local streets. Drury Lane perhaps? Or Endell Street? The employee disappears looking less than hopeful.

"I've lost my car," explains Smith. "I can't remember where I parked it."

And as a C-reg Porsche sits lost somewhere in Covent Garden, we get back to the far more important matters at hand.

"Have you seen my gay robot?"

ruby wax

Ruby Wax throws invites straight in the bin — invites to parties that “ten years ago, I would have dribbled at the bit to get”. But she keeps her fan mail — not because she’s proud of it, but because the police might find it useful one day.

“Some of them are so peculiar that you’re sure Tennessee Williams has written them. It’s a sick mind, really sick, and they hardly speak the English language. I get more regular fan letters too, but they’re probably like the ones Mark Chapman sent John Lennon. I save them in case something horrible happens.”

Most everything else finds its way into the garbage pretty quickly, however. “I can’t stand clutter. I clear all surfaces regularly, obsessively. In fact I usually finish the day up to my elbows in the garbage looking for something I threw away that I still need. I once threw something out deliberately because I knew that I’d need it later and if it was in the garbage I’d know where to look for it.”

The obsessive cleaning is a trait Wax has inherited from her mother, the co-star of Wax’s recent Channel 4 show *Miami Memoirs*. Viewers will remember that her parents’ sofa still sported the plastic covering it was delivered in.

Wax is following up the documentary style of *Memoirs* with a new Channel 4 series, *Wax On Wheels*, premiering on May 12th. She describes it as “a documentary of a chat show going wrong” — a chat show where ‘stars’ are replaced by ordinary people (but hopefully not the ordinary people who write to her).

The family obsessiveness extends to list-making. Lists she does not seem to be able to throw away. “I make lists, and then the lists get smaller, then you get pads within pads, lists within lists, all overwritten in red and then overwritten again in thick felt tip till it looks like graffiti on a wall.”

This inability to throw a piece of paper away and start over cost her dear when she was looking for a nanny. “I just held this mess up and said, ‘this is what I’m like’ and most of them said, ‘forget it!’”

Though Wax keeps little “clutter” now, some childhood things are sacred. “If my girl scout uniform was thrown out I’d be devastated,” she admits. And when the basement of her parents’ home in Evanston, Illinois was flooded, the loss of her grade school exercise books hit her hard. “They were full of ‘Thus, the difference between Shakespeare and Egypt is...’ Basically I don’t really care to keep things now, but my childhood stuff is different. My mother has a drawer that has a pair of underpants of mine from every age — still in the plastic. You can watch me grow up through my underwear.”





gray jolliffe

"All my greatest work gets chucked in the bin. The real rubbish is the stuff that gets printed." After an hour discussing garbage, cartoonist Gray Jolliffe — the man behind the "Wicked Willie" books — is coming to some disturbing conclusions.

When Jolliffe draws, he begins with a rough, and then traces over it, smoothing out the edges. A stream of desperately funny and brilliantly drawn "originals" hits his bin day-in, day-out as the sanitised final drawings stack up.

"The first drawing I do is the best — very loose and 'I don't care'. The quality of lunacy I get in that, the subsequent ones just don't have. After that I tighten up. It's a tragedy, really."

Tight drawings make their way into the bin, too. When Jolliffe is on the phone he doodles — tight, draughtsmanlike sketches of nuts and bolts and battleships, and (analysts take note) airplanes crashing into the sides of hills. As far removed as you could imagine from his less than draughtsmanlike cartoons. By his doodles, you wouldn't know him.

His waste bin lies in other ways, too. The reason you'll never find food wrappers in there is not because Jolliffe doesn't like snacking, but because he likes it too much and has declared a ban on food in his office as a result. Nor are the piles of dog ends in there a sign of a smoker, but of a non-smoker who empties his ashtrays into the bin the second his smoking friends have left.

One thing that he's always sure his cleaning lady will throw away the second he leaves the room is a rubber creation that very closely resembles a spilled pot of jam. The first time the cleaning lady saw it, she went to clear it up. Jolliffe tried to stop her, explaining that he wanted to keep it. "Oh, you wouldn't like it," she countered, "it's gone solid."

"I know she still wants to throw it," he says. "And one day when I'm not looking, she will. In fact, there are lots of things I wish she'd get rid of. In my soul I'm a minimalist, but I'm burdened with a terrible hoarding instinct. It's probably one of the most serious causes of tension in my life."

One thing that was lost that he wishes he still had is his father's "beautiful" all-leather flying suit: standard RAF issue during the war, but a seriously desirable fashion item now. "I dread to think what that must have been worth."

Jolliffe panders for a while. "What else have I chucked away? I chucked a lot of good money away when I was in the film business — the film business! I was trying to direct commercials. Anyway, I chucked a lot of food down undeserving people's throats in those days. Everybody gets taken out to lunch. And they go through the card. 'I'll have some profiteroles.' Oh. Yeah. Profiteroles. Great."



ian hislop

"I may have scared the girl on Monday when I said I was RHUBARB MURDER PURVEYOR OF TOXIC WASTE. Did she think I was M15 trying to trap her to mention Murdoch's name...?"

As editor of *Private Eye*, Ian Hislop gets letters. Like this one. Lots of them. And they end up in the bin. This letter was thrown away despite the generous offer of a front cover idea with eight alternate captions. Each as funny as the next one. Which wasn't funny at all. It managed to tut across two categories of letters which together make up most of Hislop's professional trash.

"I get enormous amounts of letters from mad people written in green biro concerning some vast conspiracy involving the CIA, the Jews and Derek Jameson. And lots of very, very bad cartoons. With captions like 'Fuck Thatcher'. They sometimes progress onto felt pen for that."

Hislop's 'home' rubbish is different. There his bins are full of "folded up bits of papers with ideas on them. I'm a great one for jotting down really clever ideas, and then not being able to work out what I was on about when I read them again later."

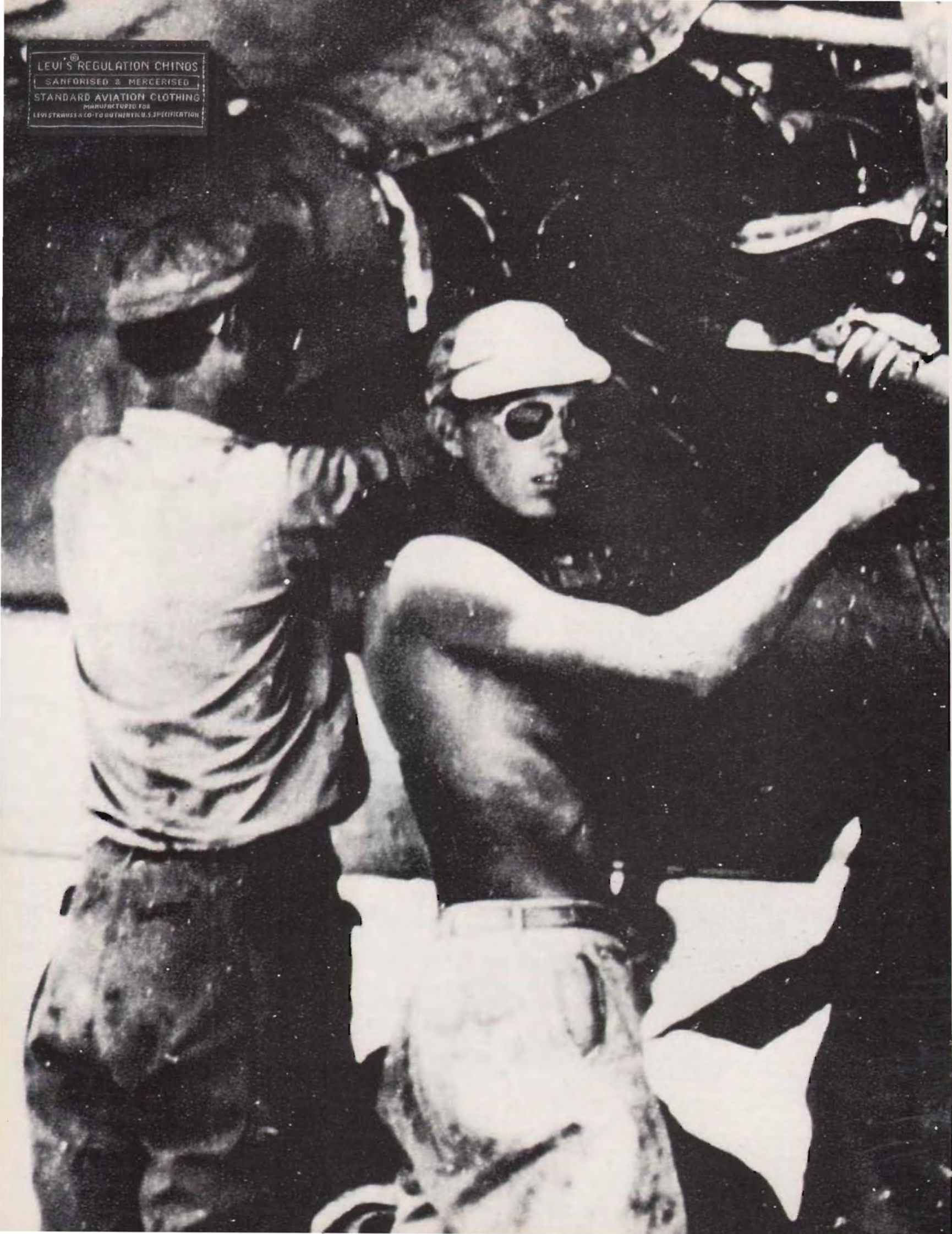
Apart from that, it's "first drafts of *Spitting Image* sketches, or sketches that just didn't make it; and endless lists of puppets. Plus huge amounts of newsprint. I feel the council should come round on Monday and clear The Sunday Times away."

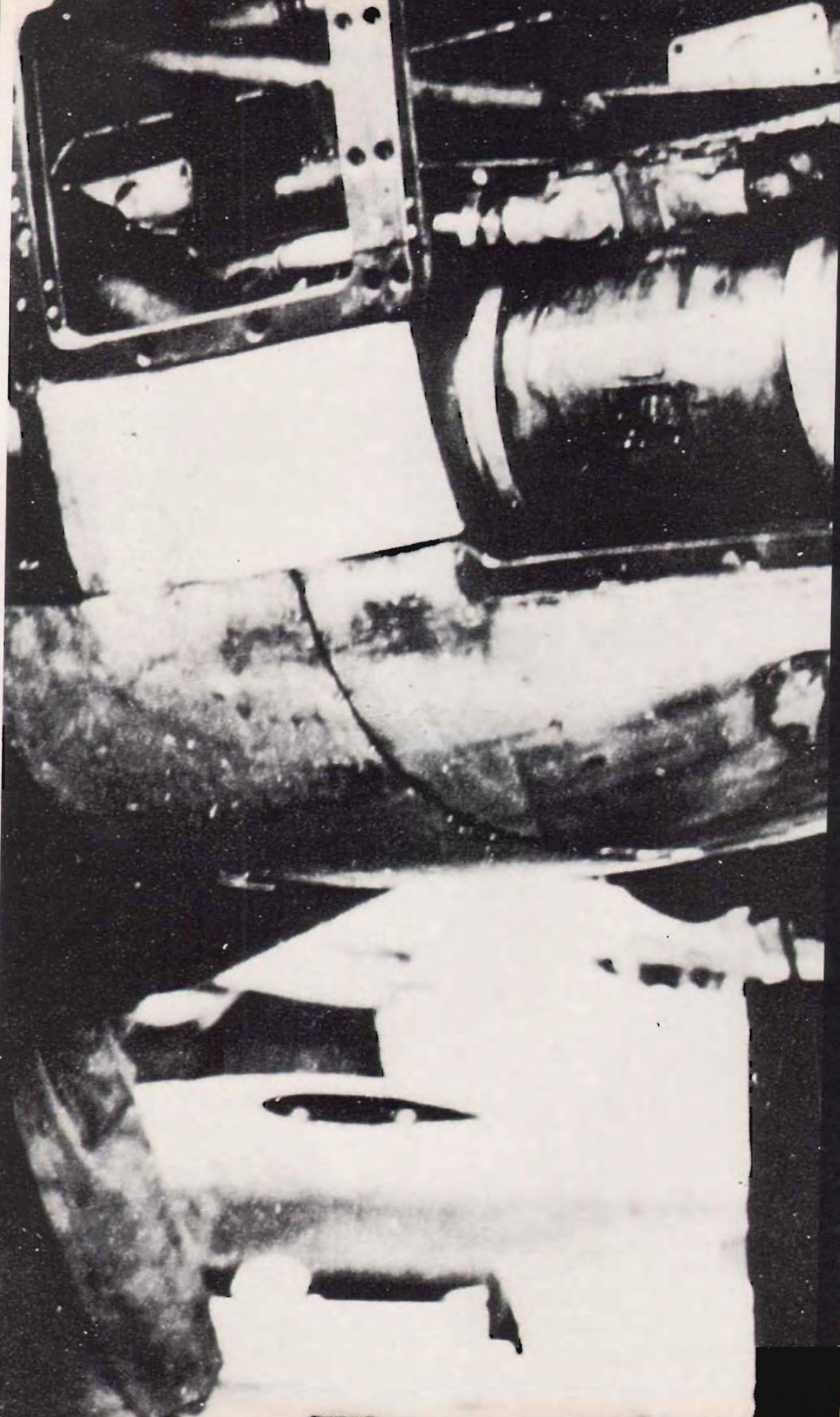
Both at home and in the office, he's a hoarder. "Everything in here is rubbish really," he admits, looking round the office. "And when we moved house last year, we were going to clear things out, but all we did was spend days looking through old stuff, getting very nostalgic about the past and actually throwing nothing away."

The future, however, is crystal clear. All you have to do is dig deeper into Hislop's binned letters and you discover the wise words of the Maitreya, or Christ reborn. He emerged again in the East End of London, and was discovered in 1982 by his disciple Benjamin Crewe. His thoughts and predictions (well, promises really) are regularly passed on to lucky journalists. Like the fact that drug-taking will decrease; or that glasnost will continue but at a slower pace; and that there's actually no hole in the ozone layer. "Imagine you are holding a tennis ball in the dark," writes the Maitreya, as an explanation of the state of the planet, "and you shine a torch on it. If you bring the torch closer, the light will be on the surface of the ball, but behind the ball there is..."

Yeah. You've got it.

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YOU HAD TO
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kooking the books

This morning, Tama Janowitz is only the second most newsworthy novelist in Britain. Salman Rushdie is on the run.

"It's so weird!" cries Janowitz at the appalling headlines. "It's just bizarre!"

So no one has ever tried to kill you?

"No! What are you suggesting? What are you insinuating? No one resents me that much. *Gedouda my suite!*"

It's very early in the morning, the pale beginning of a busy day of hype, which will climax – without fireworks – at a party in the Groucho Club. Tama Janowitz is tired, but she's there on the sofa, picking at bread rolls and figs, and quite awake – as if to dispute one definition of her alleged literary clique: They publish early and stay up late.

Tama Janowitz, it seems, no longer stays up late. "I'm not a night person." She pauses. "I'm not a morning person. I'm not a *day* person." Late afternoon?

"That's when I get sort of sleepy. Kinda rules out life in general..."

It's very early, so Janowitz's sentences are fizzling out to nothing, or abruptly ending with a laugh through the nose – halfway to a sneeze – and a cheery shrugged apology. ("Really, I'm used to sleeping till ten"). Andy Warhol called her "really kooky" (adding: "Every time she goes to the bathroom, she comes back and her hair's higher. It gets higher and higher and higher"), but it's a friendly, unthreatening kookiness, which doesn't rule out the possibility that she should be taken seriously. After two novels, a celebrated book of short stories, and now the screenplay for Merchant Ivory's *Slaves Of New York*, Janowitz is perhaps entitled to irritation when regarded merely as the superkook. "It doesn't

It's a big step from over-hyped bratpacker to serious novelist. Tama Janowitz is just past midstride.

INTERVIEW IAN PARKER
PHOTOGRAPH RICHARD DEAN





▶ matter how I behave," she sighs. "They still write the same stories. I'm just trying to make a living from my writing."

The received highbrow wisdom is that those who live by hype should die by it. Beneficiary to ludicrously successful self-publicity at the publication of *Slaves Of New York* (a campaign which included dressing in a silver Stephen Sprouse jacket to hand out photocopied excerpts to three-piece suited gents on East 42nd Street), Janowitz has since suffered the consequences.

Janowitz may protest her innocence and demand to be taken seriously;

"Slaves Of New York — a book of short stories — getting made into a film? I mean, that's insane, I still don't understand it."

she may distance herself from an otherwise all-male brat pack, and inform anyone who cares to hear that she's tucked in bed by midnight, but distaste and envy have together conspired to withhold from Janowitz normal literary courtesies. When her second novel, *A Cannibal In Manhattan*, was published last year, its failings were pounced upon with audible glee. The book *was* disappointing — a cumbersome lump of plot had replaced the crafty characterisation and seemingly spontaneous wit of *Slaves Of New York* — but it was not a disaster. The criticism had a subtext. Janowitz's true crime had been to set her own marketing rules — to allow herself to become *fashionable* — and some sections of the print establishment could never forgive her for that. It was *their* job to rule on what was fashionable. Janowitz was a smartarse. How could you trust someone whose dogs — Yorkshire terriers named Lulu and Beep-beep — had *hairdos*?

"There's always a lead review in The New York Times," says Janowitz about the kind of author she is not, "a moving, sensitive, evocative, beautifully written, lovely book about coming of age, another piece of puff-fluffery — beautiful family with problems..."

When Janowitz's first novel, *American Dad*, was published in Britain for the first time this February, it was reviewed in *The Independent*. The piece began: "The gossip column in this month's *New York Woman* informs me that Tama Janowitz 'has recently been spotted at not one, but two dinner parties, with dirt encrusted under her fingernails'. If it is that easy to shock her fellow New Yorkers, one wonders why Janowitz's fiction has always worked so hard at being odd..." It's a revealing opening — unaccountably superior — which, through the marriage of snobbery ("informs me... one wonders...") and gibberish ("worked so hard at being odd"), strives to damn someone on the grounds that they have been written about in a foolish way. The review goes on to discuss the extent to which "Tama" can be considered a "happening person". This is Janowitz's fate; to be addressed as Tama in idle *ad hominem* reviews in senior newspapers.

Eight years after its US publication, *American Dad* survives as a highly respectable first novel — with strong autobiographical elements (poet mother, psychiatrist father, monkey as horribly unsuccessful pet), and a soft-spoken humour lurking behind the grotesque. For all the talk of contrived oddness, *American Dad* is rather less experimental than Janowitz's hairstyle:

"Yeah. I don't feel I have a need to be something different. To me,

there seems plenty to work on just using the elements of language and characterisation. It doesn't have to be chopped up and not making any sense."

It took eight years to reach Britain; at its US publication in 1981, *American Dad* suffered what Janowitz describes as a "typical American publishing experience". It had a few encouraging reviews, there was a certain amount of cultured interest, but the novel was almost universally unavailable in the bookshops. No one could buy it, and no one did. To have it reappear is satisfying. "It makes me feel great. It's got so much energy and it's so crazy and the guy's so awful and there's so much rage on the page. I just think, sure, there are things I might have learned to do better but I might also have lost some nice things that were there... There *was* something in that book. At the time it was 'Well, Tam, the book just wasn't any good, and that's why it didn't sell.' They sent me a bill for the advance, you know. They gave me an advance, and when it didn't sell, they sent me a bill! I had no money and they sent me a bill for \$6,000! They're not supposed to do that! What?! I publish a book and now you're charging me? I didn't pay it back. What the hell... Do you peel figs? Do you peel them? No, in general."

Because *American Dad* didn't sell, Janowitz's return to print was delayed. "I couldn't get the next book published. So it was really like four years of writing books, getting them turned down, barely making a living on grants and awards. And I knew if I ever got a job I wouldn't write. I couldn't get up. God. I can't get up *now*. How could I get up at six and write till eight and then go work? I don't *have* that physical energy, y'know..."

In 1986, the success of *Slaves Of New York* served to protect Janowitz from fulltime employment. In the place of work, she found herself in constant demand as the thinking person's kook. Janowitz had been acquiring culty artsy credibility since her first short story in *The New Yorker*; now she was the biggest postmodern smell in Manhattan — a talkshow dream with big hair and small spectacles and a line in sassy cultural sound bites. She earned the phrase "walking theatre", and even got to do her own short-lived TV tourist guide: "I went to this crummy rundown alligator farm, near St Augustine — big alligators — in a big pen by a pool of water, *no* tourists there, and they had this man taking me round. He said, 'The alligator is one of the oldest reptiles...' I said: 'Have you ever cheated on your wife?'"

After a phase as "Alfred Hodder Fellow in the Humanities" at Princeton University, Janowitz has now settled into an easy New York routine. "I get up in the morning, make coffee, get to the typewriter, sit there for a couple of hours, then usually it's time to take the dogs out. You'd hate my dogs so much. Then in the afternoon, I go to a bookstore, pay my bills, make my phone calls — and I usually go out at night just because I'm alone all day. I want to see some human beings, but I don't want to go to nightclubs — I never could, what the hell d'you do there? I don't mind going out to dinner with my friends, or going ice skating, or bowling. I'm a terrible bowler, and I haven't got any better. It's quite amazing. This is like a real rundown bowling alley in Port Authority, and you go past these derelict guys — up the back there's a seedy bar. You never have to wait for a lane — this *isn't* a hip place... Are you gonna write a mean article?"

No no.

"Nice shoes."

Thank you.

"Very nice."

Slaves Of New York, the film, is released in June. It stars Bernadette Peters and Christopher Walken. It was made by Merchant Ivory, who bought the rights to the stories from The Foundation, Andy Warhol's

"With my first book, they gave
 me an advance, and when it
 didn't sell, they sent me a bill!
 I had no money and they sent
 me a bill for \$6,000! What!
 I publish a book and now you're
 charging me?"

estate. "A book of short stories getting made into a film? I mean that's insane. I still don't quite understand it. Andy – Andy Warhol – bought the stories. He was always saying, 'Write the screenplay, write the screeneenplay,' and I was saying 'I don't want to write a screeneenplay. It's not my job, I'm sick of the stories. I'm sick of the material.'" No, you have to write the screeneenplay, Tam. It'd be good for your car-*eer*.' I said, 'Look...' – that was how he talked, car-*eer* – I said, 'Look, I don't care about my car-*eer*.' 'No-oo. You *need* to do it – for your car-*eer*.' That was the only time I got in a sort of fight with him. It was the only time he started yelling at me. So I did it, from five of the stories. And I handed it to him in December and he died in February. I've always thought, thank God I did it. It wasn't what I wanted to do, but at least I did something he wanted before he died. In the end, I didn't hate it as much as I thought I would; I could make up new dialogue, give the characters new life. And then when Jim [James Ivory] started to work on it with me, I had the other half of the book to put in, new stuff to put in it. He taught me a lot."

Like?

"Like you can't have two characters talking about a third character who hasn't been met yet."

And?

"And dialogue's best if I say a sentence and then you say a sentence and then I say a sentence. Really, it's remarkable how a chunk of dialogue that looks like it's very brief on the page actually is way, way, way too long. In my fiction I could have characters talk for two pages. Most movies are just plots: 'OK. Let's go. They're outside. Let's get the drugs. We'll shoot them. Let's go...' And then there's a moment of: 'You know, I'll never forget you...' That's *atmosphere*. I was only ever interested in the *atmosphere*, in what made them tick, the funny language, the way people talk. To hell with the plot: 'Am I gonna get the show? I dunno if we're gonna get the show...'"

There's a knock on the door.

"Yeah. Hi. I'm trying to get up. He's tied me down."

At Groucho's, Janowitz does some low-grade schmoozing, talks to the TV camera, and has her photograph taken. Then she hands me a copy of a Marvel comic: The Spectacular Spider-man ("Welcome to San Diego, Spider-man – It's a great place to DIE!!"). "You're the only person here I've given this to," she purrs, clutching my shoulder. "They rang me up and said, 'Is it OK for you to go on a talkshow with Peter Parker?' I was saying 'Naaah, I don't wanna go on any more talkshows...' They said, 'Peter Parker. *Peter Parker, Spiderman!*'"

And there on the page – not bad, just drawn that way – is Tama Janowitz, miniskirted and sharing a TV studio with Peter Parker. Parker is plugging a collection of candid Spiderman photographs.

He says to her: "Why do you do it, Tama? You're an important, serious writer. Your book *Slaves Of New York* is the best post-postmodern fiction I've ever read. You're funny and you're a *person*, even if you do dress weird. With all that going for you, why ride the book promo circuit?"

She says to him: "Us serious writers gotta eat Pete. And speaking of eating..."



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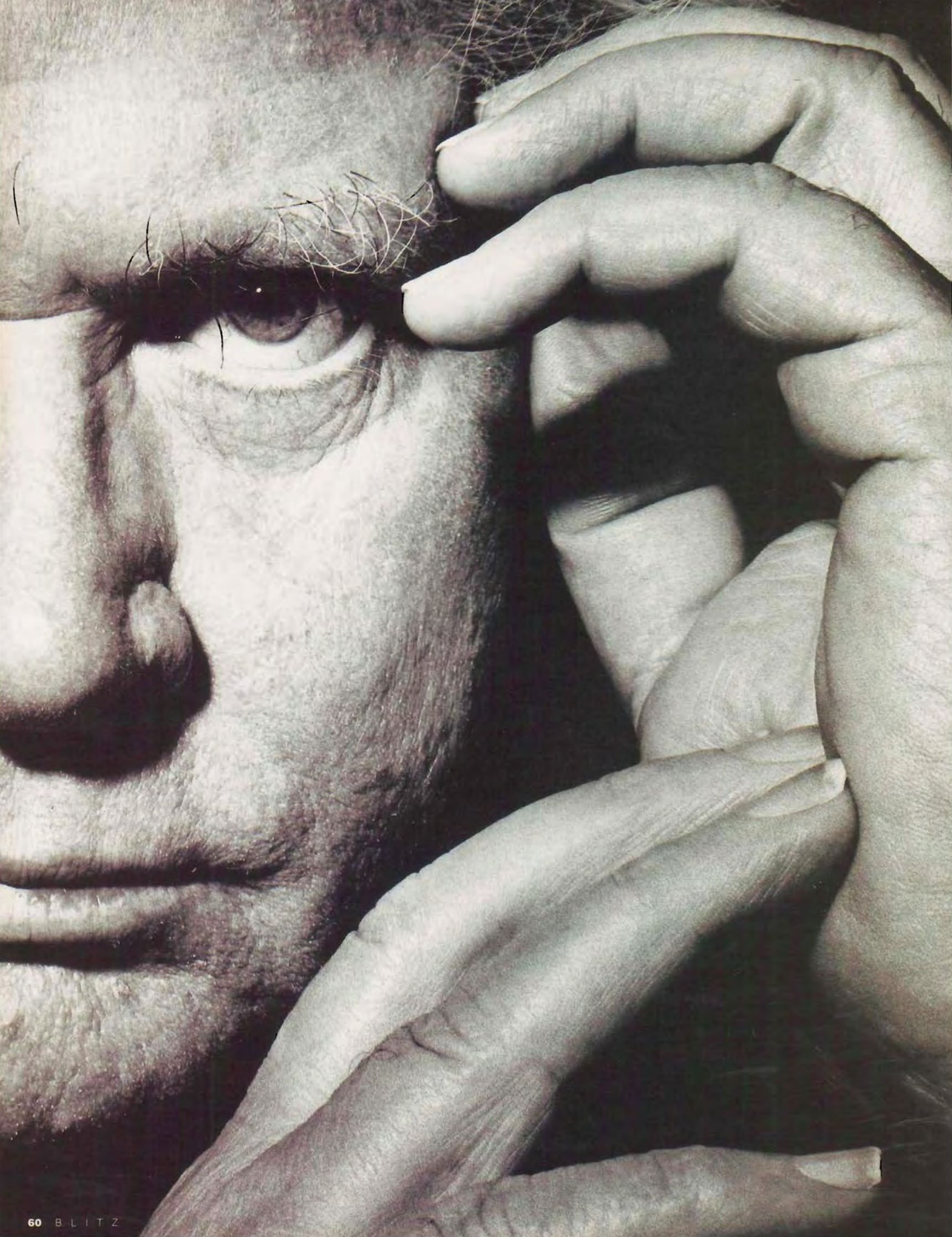


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ken mad

Either you hate Ken Russell's films, or you hate them and see the funny side.

INTERVIEW PAUL MORLEY PHOTOGRAPH GINO SPRIO

Suddenly, an event. So suddenly. One second, there I am, walking past the Ritz Hotel in London, towards the club where I have an early afternoon and fairly average promotional appointment with the blundering monstrous melodramatist, Southampton's own ruddy diddy daddy Dante, Ken Russell. I walk into the St James's Club and as soon as I am through the door, so suddenly, the banality of the surroundings and the ordinariness of what I'm doing is immediately interrupted...

...The smashing of a window pane, the blood and tears of a whole life, a sight of Narcissus turning away from himself, a young Roger Daltrey explaining to me the rules of whist, an ageing William Hurt quietly telling me that all life comes back to the question of our relations with one another, and a nun holding a dagger and tearing her habit open so that half a bosom is exposed...

...Steve Martin's eyes followed with dread the course of the dagger. The weapon's point rested on the nun's left breast – and oh! that was such a breast. The moonbeams darting upon it enabled Steve Martin to observe its dazzling whiteness; his eyes dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beauteous orb; a sensation until then unknown filled his heart with a mixture of anxiety and delight; a raging fire shot through every limb; the blood boiled in his veins, and a thousand wild wishes bewildered his imagination. "Hold," he cried in a hurried, faltering voice, ►



Salome's Last Dance

"I can resist no longer!"

► Steve Martin wearing an arrow through his head sucks up the blood from the nun's wound, as I struggle down the stairs in the St James's Club. Assaulting drips, jabs and silly supernatural suggestive of a stock solid Russelling flashforward stretch me out on a mental rack. I'm hurled back to the day, the hour, the minute, the hollow of when I last entered the St James's Club, drunk on life and plenty of money, overripe to interview the American comedian Steve Martin.

Steaming memories of the embarrassing tragedy of me trying to outwit Martin, lunging now towards me with vengeance and without arms, paralyse me with their grossness. I find myself stumbling into a nearby room, the demonically incongruous images of Martin the nun-eating amputee blissfully fading from mind and retina. Surprisingly, the blinding porno-mime visions are comfortably replaced by a hefty man with a pale pink face, a kind nonchalant voice, a mess of wild white hair, eyes that might be merry, who's wearing a sick shirt and funny other things. The malicious impresario in creep's clothing.

Ken Russell, in this room at St James's, is as calm as the dawn. We have one of those hours to talk about his films, which might be as mad as the world, exegetical assaults on experience, grisly spectacles of heroes and heroines attempting to murder their own egos; or which might be bluff and vulgar farces which childishly attempt to open the doors to *magic*. For this interview, I'm as sober as a shark. But not for long. As the blood, gore and fake arrow of Steve Martin finally dissolve away, leaving me alone in a small dining room with a tranquil lunatic, Russell orders a bottle of champagne.

The drink will gradually redden Russell's face during the interview until he appears nearly strangled, and it will relax me enough to eventually ask him the one question that I had planned to ask. What

Ken Russell's films are lewd and blasé, coarse and cheap excess settings for all manner of freaks and fakes. They are what they are, and whatever they are, they could only be Russell's.

kind of drugs has Russell taken in his life?

"None," he sighs, perhaps disappointed. "I just imagine what it must be like. I don't take drugs, although I once did take a bite of a magic mushroom."

He pauses, as he often does, with the confident relish of a natural comic actor, waiting for me to ask: what happened? He grins to himself, and continues.

"I imagined that I was being shot at by a born-again christian..."

This, as with most of his stories, seems to amuse him almost as much as his films. Has he ever been tempted to take a hallucinogenic drug?

"Oh, I'd love to take them. But I don't – it's fear. I'm a coward. A real craven coward. I'm frightened of getting hooked. I was once hooked on the most unobnoxious drug in the history of mankind."

He pauses again, waiting for someone to volunteer to play dumb

Ken

straightman. I'm happy to do so. Indeed, it's what I'm here for. What were you hooked on? I ask with Syd Little verve. A bit more of the pause, and suddenly:

"Snuff," he announces with the proud comic timing of Paul Eddington, his eyes twinkling, and even his hair. "It's all in a book I've written about myself..."

The champagne arrives, and we begin the interview where Russell is likely to begin one of his films. Beside the beginning. As one of those hours starts, I notice – sitting on the chair next to Russell – *something*



Altered States

vile and lurid, shitty and stupid, a shape of pure dread that might, in its horror, symbolise the antique superstitions that he often catalogues in his films; that might give us a clue as to the way he is cursed. As we talk, the three things I concentrate on most are Russell's mirth, the champagne and this diseased object on the chair next to Russell.

What is there in Russell's past that has contributed to the insolent razzmatazz of his filmmaking? Russell lethargically pretends his past is dim and distant, definitely noncommittal when it comes to wondering about subconscious influences and motives. You know for sure that he's either got absolutely nothing to hide and really was a plain, simple South English lad who merely visited the cinema every day, or that he has an awful lot to hide, and that his life is strained to the limit with ghosts and guilts from his childhood. Also, of course, it's all in the book he's written about none other than himself, and he's not driven by the thought of revealing all his prized anecdotes in the third of six interviews today.

"Even before I was ten, my mother took me every day to the cinema. She would never go to a British film. She thought they were all crap, and in the Thirties there were very few good British films. 'Oooh, Ken,' she'd say [and here Russell uses the hag woman's voice that Monty Python's Terry Jones used playing Mrs Jean-Paul Satre], '...it's a British film... We're not going in there!'"

Aah, I murmur thoughtfully, perhaps this accounts for why your films always demand attention so spitefully – deep down you want to prove to your mother that there can be such a thing as a great British film!

"Mmmm..." he mutters, as if he is suffering from a sort of amnesia, "I suppose so..."

Russell has a way of saying "mmm... I suppose so" every time I ask him something long, learned and provocative, as if he'd never thought of it at all before, as if he'd never thought of *anything* at all before. For instance, I might ask him, politely and even seriously, if he likes in his films to make what imaginative use he can of every phase of your earthly condition, if he feels that everything in life is sacred and everything is a huge jest. And if so, is this why his films, whatever they may be about, are certainly *not* about Liverpool tarts, laundrettes or British spies.

"Mmmm... I suppose so..."

Your films aren't *British* films in the way that we've had to get used to lately?

"No... I suppose not. In fact, the book I've written about myself is called *The British Picture*... There's the kind of British film that always looks at the downside of life, at little local struggles. They're very inward. But there's a magical side to this country that I think is totally ignored. The people in Britain, it seems, would rather that the mythical side of life would really go away. I want to drag it out and say, *Hey! Look at this!* And I do think that this is a magical place – I just think it's *weird* here. I get a kick out of absorbing all the special magical quality and romanticism of the place and celebrating it. But this, of course, doesn't fit into the accepted notion that a British film should be, above all, *restrained*."

Why particularly is he so unrestrained? Did he want to show off, appear clever, as a young boy?

"I was dumb. I didn't know what clever was. I was just a town boy. But I went to the cinema every single day. It was terribly simple. All I'd read was *Picture World* and *Film Fun*. There was no reading in our house. We just read the local *Echo* to see what was on at the cinema. I was crazy about films. It was just a wonderful world of the imagination. It became the continuation of my own fantasies. There was this big conker tree in our garden and whatever film I saw, well, the tree was either a tank or a ship or a castle the next day. I just lived in my imagination... There were hardly any kids in my street. Every child likes to create their own fantasies, but I've probably gone on longer than most with my fantasies. In fact they're still going on now. It just happened that films were my world. Every day. With my mother. In the dark. I never saw daylight until I was 10."

We both conspire to ignore the heavy psychological shadows that flew past and through us as Russell rattled off those last three sentences.



Instead, I lazily suggest that the thought of making films must have fascinated him as a child.

"Mmmm... I suppose so. I used to get the *Amateur Cine-World*, which was a funny little booklet, and I entered a competition that they held to write a script for a two-minute film. I wrote one, and thought it was absolutely brilliant. I was 12. It didn't win. I couldn't believe it! I read the winner, and thought it was total madness that I didn't win."

So you always wanted to make films?

"Mmmm... I suppose so. I had to do something during the war, and so I went to the nautical college in Pangbourne. This might seem flip, but the only reason I joined the navy was because I thought I might meet Dorothy Lamour – really! I didn't know that all her films were made on a Hollywood lot. I thought they were really made in the South Seas. I eventually did get on a ship that went to the South Seas. I never saw her... I was beaten for seeing a Dorothy Lamour film when I was at school. The cinema was just outside the five mile limit, and I was caught several times out of bounds. In my little naval uniform..."

Simply put, Russell's other obsession is music. When did his feelings for music begin?

"I did one trip with the merchant navy, and I had a nervous breakdown. You've heard of Captain Bligh? Well, our captain was his bad brother. So I had a bit of a lapse... I went back home and just sat in an armchair, with my mother hovering around me, saying, 'When are you going to join your father's business?' I didn't want to go into that, so I just sat there, and did nothing. My mother always had the radio on, and one day I heard this amazing music. Up to then I hadn't been into classical music at all... My mother was amazed – I just got out of the chair for the first time in three months, pumped up the tyres on my Hercules bicycle, cycled to a record shop, and bought the music I'd heard, Tchaikovsky's *B Flat Minor Concerto*. And so I found another world of imagination. I began to imagine pictures to this music, and that's when I really began to think of making these ideas happen in a film. I just wrote off to all the film studios that there were, and each one let me go and have a good look around."

"I was allowed to see what was going on, and there'd be Valerie Hobson marrying a different man in every studio, wearing a different costume, but it was always her... and it was always Springtime in Park Lane or Maytime in Mayfair. None of them would give me a job. I was from Southampton, and didn't know anyone in the industry, both of which things were unheard of. It was probably for the best, for me. I didn't want to make those kind of films... Early on I was always watching American films, but then I discovered German Expressionist films, and Cocteau, and I wanted to make *fantastic* films."

I suppose this is all in the books that you've written about yourself.

"Yes, it's all there, all in detail, five hundred pages of it, of stream-of-consciousness, flowing back and forth... one thing sparks off another... It's all about toy trains and hand-cranked projectors... Betty Boop and Fritz Lang... and the Naval College, Pangbourne... My mother's in it a lot..."

Of course.

"It's out next year. I'm also going to make a film of it."

A pause, until I ask the inevitable question. Who is going to play Ken Russell? He's obviously glad I asked that. "My son," he says in triumph. "He's four years old. He plays me all the way through the film, wearing a white wig."

As Russell discloses this, I look again at the miserable mocking thing that's on the chair next to him. I think to myself – that thing probably represents the ridiculous, fabulous Russell more effectively than little hurried thoughts about the past. That weird lump may even be a photocopy of Ken Russell's soul. He obviously takes it with him everywhere.

A conversation with Ken Russell can have its mad moments, not least when the conversation naturally turns to madness. Who could have predicted that, after I had asked Russell about his sensational interest



in madness, we could end up with 'Allo 'Allo and the IRA? A madman, presumably. I must have asked for it.

"There's a lot of madness in my book... My mother went mad. The interesting thing is, who's mad and who isn't? I'm aware that we're all mad in different ways. Madness is in us all. Well, it could be called madness, but perhaps it's just what makes us individuals. Our individual madness is our own individual perception of the world. That's what I find. It's all a game, really. Life is a game. We're playing it, and someone's playing us. It's a complicated game, and we make the board ourselves."

Ken and I ponder this for a few uneventful seconds, while he chews his hearty roast beef and yorkshire pudding, and I pick at my pansy avocado, tomato and mozzarella. Russell orders a bottle of red. I mention to him that I'd heard that William Hurt, who he directed in *Altered States*, is mad.

"No, he's just talkative. He's a nice person, but he likes the sound of his own voice. I just knew he would marry a deaf person."

There's the pause so that I can innocently ask, oh, why?

"Because no one else could stand to listen to him all the time. I also knew that when he made her take her hearing aid to bed, it was all over. He couldn't bear the thought that she couldn't read his lips in the dark."

As Russell says this, it naturally strikes me that he's a little like someone who you could imagine writing scripts for *On The Buses* or *Love Thy Neighbour*. Has he ever fancied doing a situation comedy?

"I think it would be amusing. My favourite programme is 'Allo 'Allo. It's actually a bit anarchic. The idea of making a comedy out of the Gestapo has to be applauded."

There's the pause so that I can innocently ask, oh, why?

"Because it is a comedy. A black black comedy."

At the end of this hour, for want of something better, would you call yourself a comedian?

"I am a comedian in the sense that Dante was a comedian."

"I knew that when the BBC introduced one of my films saying, and now we have a film on the French composer Claude Debussy... everyone watching would have just switched off. So instead I began it by having a girl in a T-shirt against a crucifix..."

Mockingly laugh the imps of irony, while the Saints keep their vigil... and meanwhile the demons of life dance on!

"Mmmm... I suppose so. I'd really like to do a series called *The Godmother*. It would be about an Irish woman running the IRA, and they all get blown up by their own bombs. I don't think it would go down very well, but it's got to be made. It puts a different perspective on things, because they're always blowing themselves up with their own bombs! But the IRA is always talked about in hushed tones, not as if they are hilarious, usually slipping on some terrible banana skin. Slipping on your own time-fuse has to be a huge gag."

Would you say that your films are mad, either pathetically or heroically?

"I would say that they are compulsions. That's why I never like making pop videos, because I never feel compelled to make them, I always have

to translate someone else's compulsion. Every film I've made was a compulsion... even *Altered States*, which started out as someone else's project, Paddy Tchaikovsky's. I made it into my own."

Did you feel that *Altered States* might have been your big American breakthrough?

"It was badly handled by Warners... They mass-released it instead of creeping it out. I know that every director blames a failure on the company, but it was true. I've never been on good terms with Warners. I was the twenty-seventh choice to direct that film. Bryan Forbes was the twenty-sixth! It's all in the book that I've written about myself. They went through *twenty-six directors* when it was a Columbia film. Warners wanted to do the film, but they didn't want me. It was too late – they were stuck with me. Warners hated *The Devils*... hated it... They cut out all the pubic hair, and once they did that, there wasn't much left. Every bit of pubic hair was cut out! But I did *Altered States*, and really there was no one else who could translate those hallucinations into cinema, but when it came out, they just wanted to get rid of it. I was surprised, because I thought it was a good film."

After *Altered States* in 1980, Russell didn't make a film for four years. Because it flopped?

"Well, in the end you're just trying to con some people into giving you money, and sometimes it gets hard. I've worked for years on subjects that were never made. I worked for a year on *Evita*, I worked for a year on *Beethoven*, on *Maria Callas*, on *Cleopatra*..."

Who did you want to play *Evita*?

"Well, anyone but Elaine Paige... But when you lose a film after working on it for so long, it's like losing a baby. From the first moment you think of a film, you're thinking of it morning, noon and night. You're totally preoccupied. You write it, and that takes three months. For a couple of months you're looking for locations. Then you're casting. And then at the last minute, the money goes. It's like being at the edge of a cliff. Suddenly, the ground drops away. It's not a good feeling, especially when it happens year in, year out. That's why you end up not making films for years at a time."

Faced with that, you must be mad to want to keep going through the process?

"Aaah, but human beings are stupid. I'm stupid. You always think, well, it's going to be different this time, the film is going to be made. Hope springs eternal!"

Ken attacks a piece of pudding, and pauses for a Russelling mini-shock, prepares to do one of the things he likes doing best – change the subject.

"Working on *Altered States*, I got rid of the screenwriter Paddy Tchaikovsky."

Oh? How?

"I killed him, he's dead."

Oh?

"I killed him. It's all in the book. I really did kill him. There's no question about it."

How?

"It would take too long to tell you. Read the book. But I killed him as surely as I'm pouring this wine. He was one of Hollywood's greatest screenwriters, and I killed him."

I look again at the nasty, uncanny thing that's living and dying on the chair next to Russell, while Russell glares at me like a depraved infant, and I think to myself, anyone who carries something as chilling as that thing around with them is quite capable of killing someone. Or believing that he had. Ken and I drink our glasses of red, and contemplate the next move – as sensitive as William Hurt to the difficulties of two people talking in this way in this hour and of ever making any kind of steady sense. That thing on the chair next to Russell might be the only thing about our meeting that makes sense.

Between Southampton and the conker tree and Russell's latest film – a frightfully merry Kenversion of Bram Stoker's loopy last book, *The Lair Of The White Worm*, that's as anarchic as 'Allo 'Allo, and yet sparkles with too-human zest – there have been two dozen films that were

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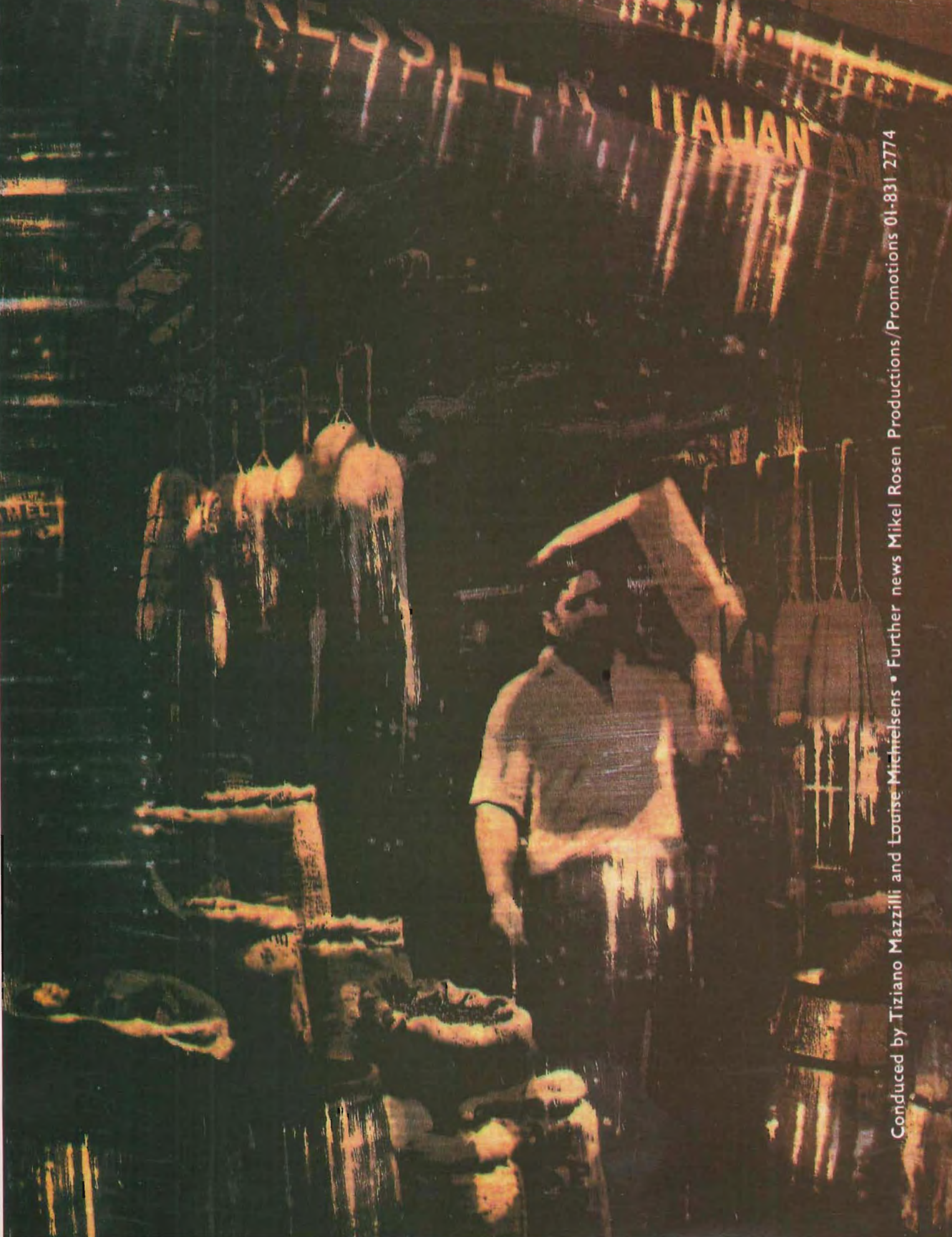
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Lair Of The White Worm is a
 bloody curdle of Polanski's hasty
 dopey Dracula, barmy Noel
 Coward matter-of-factness, Allan
 Jones emotional f-f-f-fetishism
 and a dandy Dante pile of
 hissing penises, leaking open
 wounds and strong cups of tea.

KEN

shouting. They accuse me of all that, but *they* do it far more. Unfortunately, people do seem to take notice of the critics far more than they should."

Has being so generously unloved and unwanted made you a little more perverse than you might need to be? Do you like to live up to the idea of being Ken Russell, exaggerating his nutty diabolical tendencies to the terribly piercing point of caricature because that's what people have come to expect of you – a kind of petulant frenzy?

"Mmmm... I suppose so," says Russell with a shrug, wondering perhaps whether the gravy on his meat is Bisto, or what. "There is, I suppose, a vague sense of obligation. You think, maybe you should live up to whatever it is that people imagine. You don't want to disappoint people, after all. I just look upon every film as an experiment. Some work, some don't, but if you don't try, you never know. It would be tedious to make the same film every time. The one consistent thing that I do enjoy about the responses to my films is that no one ever knows quite *how* to respond. I mean, all my films are comedies of one kind or another – a comedy that's against everything – logic, taste, reason – and even though they've got their dark side, really they're just comedies. Audiences often don't know how to react. They're not in control, they're not sure whether to laugh or cry. And they can get resentful because of that. Shit, they think, I've been had!"

So what is he hoping to do when he makes a film?

"I want to keep your attention. I started making films for Huw Wheldon at the BBC, and that was the best kind of experimental film school in the world. You were allowed to follow through your enthusiasms... and because as a film fan I'd become interested in the work of French and Russian filmmakers – of Renoir and Eisenstein and Cocteau – I wanted to make very romantic, expressive films about my personal obsessions – dance, classical music. I had to communicate to two million people about something that they didn't really want to know about. And perhaps this is where it all started from. Maybe I am partly to blame.

"I knew that when Huw Wheldon on the BBC introduced one of my films saying, 'And now we have a film on the French impressionist composer Claude Debussy, who was born in 1862 in St Germain-en-Laye just outside Paris...' well, he'd have got that far, and everyone watching would have just switched off. So I never let him introduce the film, and I began it by having a blond girl in a modern T-shirt against a crucifix..."

He chuckles to himself, still crucified by the image.

"... which is on a seashore with waves breaking, and I had other girls in tight T-shirts with bows and arrows pinging away. Well, now, the old guy in his armchair who was just about to switch off this boring programme about some French weirdo, he's hovering. Maybe this might be good after all, he thinks, as he sees these girls cavorting on the beach... He sinks back in his chair, and you've got him. It's all over. You then get on with Debussy. That way of doing things, I have retained that... it is part of my vocabulary."

A pushy mangled mix of Sun sauce, slippery sin and inexplicable detail. One moment nothing much is happening but air is being breathed; then, so suddenly, there's the murderous pyrotechnics of Cupids launching envenomed arrows and nymphs releasing lethal vapours. One moment, a little bit of Ronnie Barker cheek, a spot of specialised lechery, a blast of anonymous corruption and then – watch out! the man's getting out of his armchair! – dull gold and gory purple and so many soaraway symbols of wickedness, lust and cruelty as Russell plunges because he feels like it into the depths of the repulsive and the macabre. In a way, Russell's stubborn series of films is like the mutilated repressed cousin of the *Carry On* series; they say more about the English than we might like. They're sad, deviant, useless, alluring films that in the end are just crudely flabbergasted by life's incessant and chaotic succession of stimuli. What do you think, Ken?

"Mmmm... I suppose so," he says, thinking more about ordering the next bottle of red, oh, and how about some cheese? But Ken – how do you get the money to *make* these films? "Aaah," he says, suspiciously eyeing the horrible mess that's on the chair next to him, "that's another

finished. They are some of the daftest and, in some sense or another, most daring films of the last twenty-five years, his own series of plucky, clumsy, uniquely artificial curios. They are often nearly about the illness called love, various devotees of enlightenment, aggressive instincts, dangerous enticement, the splitting of one's own psyche, and the phantasy of biting a mother's breast. They are also lewd and blasé, coarse and cheap excess settings for all manner of freaks and fakes. They are what they are; and whatever they are, they could only be Russell's. The films start out being about being *alive*. Where they end up is Russell's funny business. You either hate them, or hate them and see the funny side. What has he been doing?

"I suppose I've been celebrating... even if it's celebrating death. Celebrating birth and enjoyment. They're about life being an adventure, a mystery, something to *enjoy*. People say to me, I heard you got married on the Queen Mary. I'd say, yes. And they would go, a bit flash, wasn't it? Of course it was! It was something to celebrate! They say, you went to the premiere of *Salome* in a car with three topless women? And, I say, yeah! And they say, well, don't you think that's awful? Well, I don't do it all the time, but let me do it once in a while... Why not? For these people you're just never meant to enjoy yourself. I remember Vanessa Redgrave telling me that she'd taken to going to the country for the weekend, and that when she went for walks, she walked with a *purpose*. And I thought, why are you so afraid to admit that you just go for walks in the country *because you enjoy it*? There's always this guilt about pure enjoyment."

Does he despair at the generally thoroughly mixed reception his films get?

"I think I'm never given credit for trying. I always try something. I go for something. I try to do things where there are bound to be mistakes, that I know will fail – but at least I went for something. In this country, you're never given credit for having tried. They just say, you failed, and say that they knew it all along. *Lizstomania* is a case in point. Oh, they said, how vulgar, terrible, it absolutely denigrates the man... They dismissed completely the idea that, after the success of *Tommy*, I just thought I'd try to parallel Lizst's life with that of a pop star, to perhaps win over a bigger audience for his music. From the reaction, you'd think I'd shown Christ as the Devil. They just wanted a refined film about the restrained way that *they* perceived Lizst..."

Russell has an ingenious intelligence, but is no intellectual. He's amused, pleased and even a little hysterical about his films, and even now seems at a loss as to why the critics are never really at his side. He likes a good sulk when the critics are mentioned, wonderfully red-faced and lonely and misunderstood.

"Why can't they just say, a good try, but a disaster – which I could quite understand. But no, they say, disgusting! Appalling! Trash! Tripe! The overreaction is bizarre. They just don't want to see. They go to my pictures in dark glasses. Of course, being me, I always think that this time I'm going to make a film that they're going to like, and all will be well in heaven. It never happens. When I do a film that's very straightforward, no tricks, nothing fancy, like *Savage Messiah*, it's not even mentioned. It's hardly reviewed at all. It doesn't exist for them, because they can't rant like usual about it. It was a good film. I cannot win. If I do something straight and honest with good acting, no imaginary things, then they ignore it. They love jumping up and screaming and

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story altogether. It's all in the book I've written about myself." He smiles indulgently, and just to prove that he has no class at all, he pats the curious, disgusting thing next to him.

In the late Eighties, Vestron have given Russell the money to concoct a few socking mock-occult wastes of time. No one *wastes* time quite like Ken Russell. "Can you imagine it," he gleefully exclaims, all but aghast. "I've actually found two people with money who like my films! Two people in the whole world is pretty good going."

I wonder what his two supporters at Vestron thought when they read the impeccably inscrutable Russell screenplay of Bram Stoker's deranged last novel. Russell sets down dead straight a deadly tale of killer worms and serious swooning in deepest Derbyshire that's a bloody curdle of

"Why can't critics just say, a good try, but a disaster. That I could quite understand. But no, they say, disgusting! Appalling! Trash! Tripe! They don't want to see. They go to my pictures in dark glasses."

Polanski's hasty dopey Dracula, barmy Noël Coward matter-of-factness, Allan Jones emotional f-f-f-fetishism and a dandy Dante pile of hissing penises, leaking open wounds and strong cups of tea. If you have any sense, you'll hate it. Is the film as weird and wonderful as Russell's England?

"Mmmm... I suppose so."

Dead and buried amidst the cock-in-cheek worming tall story that's as obvious as reproduction there's a startlingly dead and buried performance from Catherine Oxenberg, who spent many dead and buried hours as a princess in *Dynasty*. Her appearance and her dubbed accent almost tip the whole camp trick into the definitely terrible.

"Well, I have my two supporters at Vestron, but your project still has to go before their green light committee. There are about four guys, one of whom will be, say, the video sales manager, and they have to judge how the film will do in the open market. My project will be presented to them. For me, I was just sick of Transylvania, I didn't want to make the 239th Dracula film, so worms in Derbyshire with a bit of paganism and Roman burials appealed to me as a different way to approach that kind of possessed story. It might be a campy frothy thing, but it's all based on camp fact. To the green light committee, they say, OK, we've got Ken Russell doing a Dracula-type film, there's a virginal sacrifice, there's a lot of fangs, a roman orgy, a bit of rape – what we need is a name. If we can get Catherine Oxenberg, we can sell fifty thousand units in America. You get your budget out of that. Catherine Oxenberg was the difference between making the film and not making the film."

You're joking.

"I never joke."

You don't need to ask Russell what he thinks about Catherine's performance. Watch the film, where Russell hangs her in baggy white underpants right over the wide-open hellmouth of a 100-foot angry white worm. It's Amanda Donohoe, playing a 14-year-old boy scout's best friend in a bit of leather and a lot of stilleto, who hurtles into the hellmouth, but everyone knows that it should really have been blank Catherine.

How do actors and actresses fit into the Russell camp?

"To me, they're just part of the fabric. They're no more important than the clapper-boy, because the way the clapper-boy puts the board up can frighten the shit out of the actor, or it can coax a brilliant performance out of them. I say nothing to actors, but I spend a lot of time with the clapper-boy!"

Do his films truly represent his feelings?

"Films are extremely difficult to make. You have to convince the fifty people who are working on it of your feelings, your conviction. You have to make everyone believe in the thing as much as you. You have this image in your head, and you try to get it on the screen, but you'll never get that particular image, 'cos there are fifty people moving your instrument. Directing is a kind of psychological battle. There are various ways to get those fifty people to believe as much as you. Directing is about dealing with people. It's not how good you are with actors, or how brilliantly you can compose a shot, it's how you can psychologically brainwash everyone on the film to do what you want."

Are you pleased you've been a director?

"I have no talent for anything else. If I could paint or if I could conduct, I wouldn't be doing this."

What scares you the most?

"Being dead. It's *all* to do with death, and avoiding the issue. And what I want to do before I die, if I ever have the money, is to build a small mausoleum. When my ex-wife dies I will have her stuffed as an usherette holding a torch, and when people come into the mausoleum – which will be showing my films, of course – she will automatically show them to their seat. But there will only be two seats. I will be in the seat next to the person watching the film, and I will be stuffed as well. Everyone – critics, fans – will be able to come and watch my films, sat next to me. Stuffed. There will be a queue outside!"

And when the people sat next to you say anything analytical, your taped voice will reply: 'Mmmm... I suppose so.'

"Mmmm... I suppose so."

Suddenly, the end. So suddenly. One second, there I am talking to the rascal with the bitter breath about blasphemy, bums and the Brits, certainly as unsure as ever about whether to put him in a cage with Rix or Roeg, and then, so suddenly, the champagne gone, the wine finished, he's gone beyond death, his face is beyond red... his skin hangs about him in graceful drapery, his hair seems ready to shudder in sunder and divide into snakes, his eyes are irrationally jovial...

I very reluctantly glance at the dreadful inhuman object on the chair next to Russell... a horrid offence against body and soul. What the hell is it? Why on earth does he carry it around with him? Does it have some erotic pull for him? I can't stand it. What does it say about a man that he can bear to carry such a thing through his life? Has he no shame? Is he removed from the world? Doesn't he feel silly? What is it?

I quiver for real to realise that it's a gaily coloured shopping bag, the kind that might have a Bisto design emblazoned on it, or a map of the London Underground. The kind that would cost £4.50 in a gift shop that sells items of rigorous uselessness. The pattern on the bag is made up of squares full of diagonal stripes of cheery blue, yellow, red and green. It's the kind of bag that, when you see it hanging in rows in a shop, you wonder who could be so struck to buy such a thing. You can only imagine a woman living near Cornwall who has twenty-three cats and an owl and who looks like Margaret Rutherford wanting such a bag.

What has he got inside it? Scripts? Business papers? A ham sandwich? The names and addresses of critics? The anguish of a sterile, lonely soul troubled with diseased imaginings? The fig leaf from *Women In Love*? The phallus from *Lisztomania*? A couple of nuns from *Mahler*? A crucifix and a suspender belt from any number of his films? The vaginal syringe from *The Devils*? The bagpipes from *The Lair Of The White Worm*? Tina Turner's tights and a bottle of Jack Daniels from *Tommy*? All the offences from some unremembered world? Original first issues of *The Beano* and *Penthouse*?

So suddenly, it's obvious. We'll see this awful and unlawful bag, wondering what could possibly be inside it, slumping in ghastly devastation on the cover of the book that Ken Russell has, naturally, written about none other than himself.

I say goodbye and a dozen naked nuns carry me into the street. The last I see of Russell, he's preparing to leave for the North Pole, to bury his secrets among the ice floes. It will all be in his book, I suppose.

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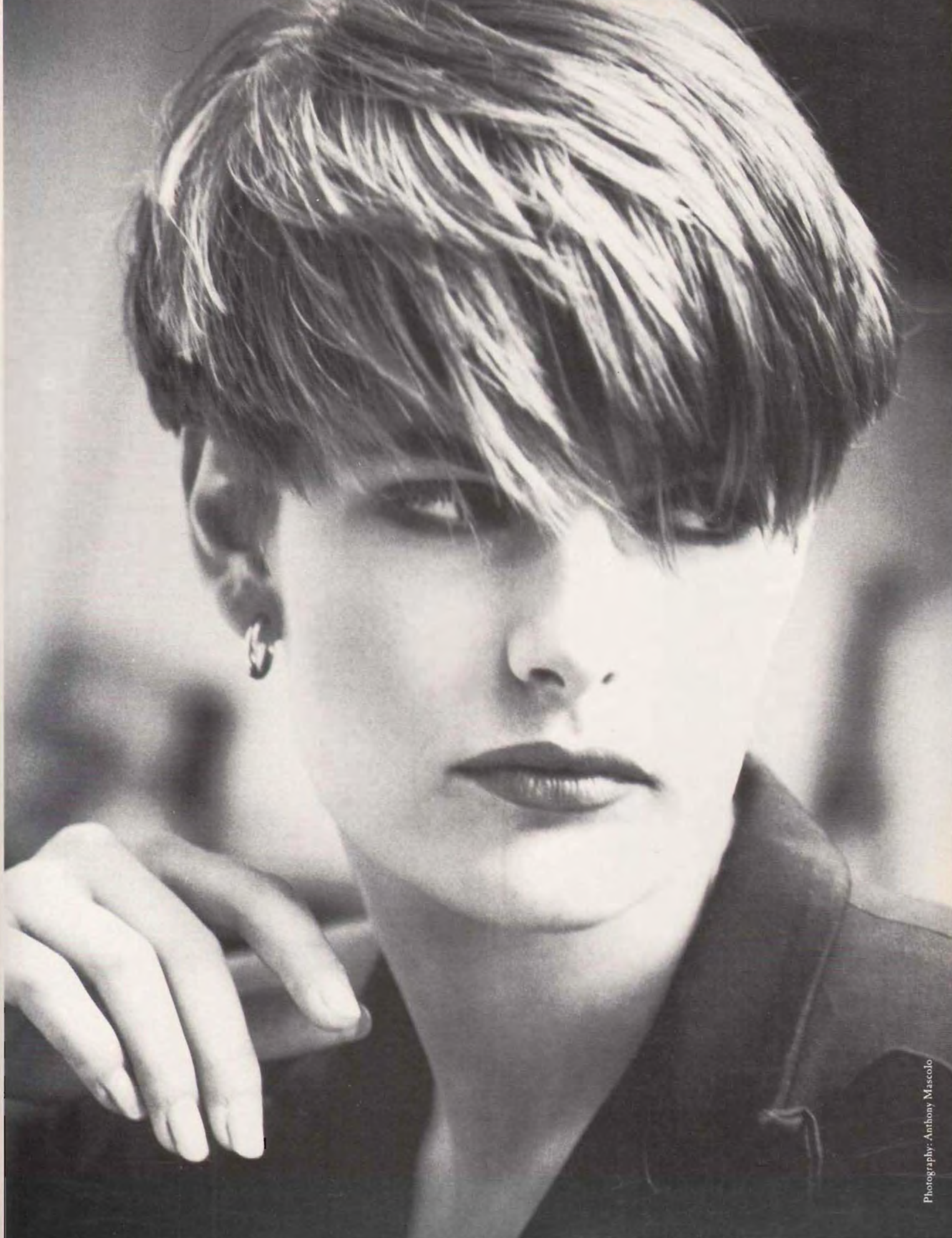
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Crafty, crazy, tall Jeff Goldblum was last seen being transformed into a

the ta



bluebottle in *The Fly*. Next month, he stars alongside Rowan Atkinson and Emma Thompson in Mel Smith's new film *The Tall Guy*.



guy

INTERVIEW JIM SHELLEY

PHOTOGRAPH GINO SPRIO

With Jeff Goldblum, I try to follow the three essentials of Shelley

Interview Technique to the letter. First, get the Savoy's room service to bring up a bottle of Piper Heidsieck champagne. Second, drink it. Third, fall in love with my subject.

Easy.

UNCORKING

What's the question you get asked most in these situations, Jeff?

"That's it! That's the very question!"

Any memorably stupid questions?

"Only the one you're afraid to ask."

You mean, *The Last Question*, the one in any interview that has to be worked up to, in case the subject walks out?

"That's it! *The Last Question*! Let's have it. Let's have it first."

Er, well, how sane are you? What's *wrong* with you, Jeff?

(Pop)

"Phew. Well, yeah, I dunno. That's quite a *Last Question*, Jim, I have to tell you... Am I in full control? What do you mean?"

People describe you as 'loopy', 'weird', 'unbalanced'; you often play strange, erratic characters and make it look as if you understand them..

"I don't think of myself as weird or loopy. I er, ah, um, like characters who are... unconventional. I like the, ah, ah, *opportunity* in acting of playing those, um, characters, where you can break out of normal, um, ah, civil and social behaviour, in order to express something in your soul or something that's more authentically 'you' in your imaginative self.

"I'm as much seduced by that part of the world that says, 'Be cool, don't let anyone know your troubles or that your life's tough for you.' But being an actor — a *good* actor, anyway — means you have to reveal yourself in the event of, in the state of, *struggle*. Doing something that maybe you *can't* win at, that maybe you're no good at, that could be *humiliating* or *embarrassing* and *undignified*, that shows you in a very *uncool* way. In every uncool way anybody ever heard of. But... But you can

► get an experience of life and of yourself that's juicy, and what could be better than that? So, generally I'm as sane as anyone."

POURING

How sane can a man really be who wears a lurid green denim jacket – buttoned all the way up to the neck? (Very sane perhaps?) Goldblum is puzzled, distracted, vague, 36, a gangling six-foot-four-inches tall, Libran, with a healthy, handsome face and powerful physique, pacing the room in big brown shoes, thinking and fidgeting, puzzling, then smiling with his big, sad, crazy eyes. With Goldblum, everything can be a brilliant revelation: "If it's OK with you [flicker, twitch, gleam], it's OK with me!" His cranky, excitable voice is blessed with the famed James Stewart stutter, with fumbling hesitancy, then, just as he loses the thread, he glimpses it, chases after it, pounces on the sense with a triumphant categoric flurry of excited emphasis.

A foolish romantic, with a supreme intelligence so obvious he's in danger of being typecast as scientist or alien or twitching genius, maybe all that's wrong with Goldblum is an excitement at life, a wonder at everything that unnerves dull adult minds. Maybe what's wrong with him is what's right with him: he's not unafraid to be uncool, he knows there's nothing more uncool than being cool.

TOASTING

In the room are a happily camp wig-maker, a made-up make-up artist called Morag, a Sicilian waiter exiled in London, an inebriated interviewer occasionally exiled in Italy, and a bemused, amused, shrewd actor. Goldblum is confused but excited, right?

"Right! It's getting like a French salon scene in here."

The Sicilian waiter's got the champagne but he hasn't got the point: "I don't know what's going on here?"

"Right!" grins Goldblum. "Who does! Right, Jim? Absolutely crazy, haha!"

The day before the interview, Goldblum had read *The Catcher In The Rye* for the first time in his life and shot a scene in *The Tall Guy* for the last time in his life. Directed by Mel Smith, Goldblum plays an unambitious American actor, stumbling towards falling in love, finding employment in a Shake'n'Vac commercial and playing straight man to Rowan Atkinson. "It's mainly about me finding myself, haha. I spend the whole picture, er, struggling, er, ah, with myself and with this girl [played by Emma Thompson], to have the, ah, courage to love her."

Are we the same, the British and the Americans?

"We're basically the same, yeah. Decent people. But then, ah, ah, you say 'boot' and I say, ah, um, 'trunk'. You say 'bonnet' and I say, ah, ah, 'hood'. Jumper, sweater. You say 'tomato', I say, ah, ah..."

It transpires that Mel Smith neglected to explain to his leading man the true horrific significance of the famed Shake'n'Vac ad. I try. "Really? Really?! My God..." says Goldblum's voice on the tape.

SIPPING

Goldblum was born and raised in a small Pittsburgh steel town. His late father was a doctor and his mother an arts lover who would take her children to galleries, ballet, theatre, at every opportunity.

"At school I felt kind of alien, yeah, I guess so. I was tall. I felt that

I met other kids who I felt were like me and my sister and my brother, interested in the arts, in music. Looking back, I can see there was a reason for it and I wouldn't want to be different from what I am, but I was unhappy sometimes, yeah. Certainly less, ah, confident than I am now, about who I am."

At 17, he moved his secret dream into reality and began studying acting at the New York Neighbourhood Playhouse with Sanford Meisner ("a Zen Master"). He quickly got a lead in *The Two Gentlemen Of Verona* on Broadway and got his first film break from Michael Winner, playing a rapist in *Death Wish*. The story goes that his second break came when he was performing the matinee of a comic revue on Broadway called *El Grande De Coca Cola*, when director Robert Altman ducked in from a snowstorm, and subsequently cast Goldblum as a boy-wonder executive in *California Split* and a mysterious biker/magician in *Nashville*. This was followed by a scene-stealing cameo ("I've forgotten my mantra") in *Annie Hall*, and *Transylvania 6-5000*, *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* and others. Then leads in Landis' *Into The Night*, *The Big Chill*, *The Fly* and Altman's *Beyond Therapy*.

Less notable early roles include *The Adventures Of Buckaroo Banzai* and *Ernie Kovacs: Between The Laughter*. Is there anything embarrassing lying around, an old *Starsky & Hutch* episode or anything?

"Nothing I'm really tormented about. I was in fact in an old episode



of *Starsky & Hutch*. I played a movie director. No, really! The boys investigate murders on Stage 19. David Soul poses as an actor. Uh, haha, and they solve the murder!"

More recently, *Vibes*, with Cyndi Lauper and the great Peter Falk, was a financial disaster at the US box office. But Julian Temple's forthcoming musical comedy *Earth Girls Are Easy* has already attracted some rave reviews – Goldblum plays a randy alien who falls for his real-life wife, Geena Davis.

Goldblum lives in a Spanish house in West Hollywood, where he also teaches acting, keeping just on the fringe of what he calls "the game side" of Hollywood.

"I'm serious about it because it's a tough and serious game and there's a lot of competition for good parts. It's funny and, ah, yucky and frustrating sometimes, like a tough game. You can be in it and not in it, and know that it's not something that you like to care about. I don't think that much about fame."

What's your favourite line about acting?

"Acting is living truthfully under imaginary circumstances."

Can you learn to be an actor?

"I think you either *are* an actor or you *aren't*. But if you are an actor, you can learn to develop it. If you're a dancer you *know*, when they put music on, it's in you. Exactly like acting. If it's in you, if you come alive under imaginary circumstances, as if the circumstances were real, then you're an actor. My teaching is to show them an experimental understanding, nothing academic or theoretical. I think acting's instinctive and emotional and temperamental."

Is it fun or serious?

"Exactly. Both. Serious fun. It's playing a game as if it was serious."

Is *The Fly* the most open you've felt in a role?

"I keep trying to do that more and more. *The Fly* was a juicy part. I worked very hard trying to be a fly."

Did *The Fly* have a lasting effect on you?

"Gee... I don't know... Yeah. But I don't know if I can name it..."

Did it make you uneasy, about being secure, being mortal?

"No, not in that way. Not anxious, no. I don't think so. It wasn't really enjoyable, no."

Do you feel empathy now with flies?

"No."

If someone goes to splat one, do you stop them?

"No. I was very interested in the love story in that movie and the life

I care about. I enjoy it."

Sam Goldwyn once said, "Anyone who goes to a psychiatrist needs their head examined." Goldblum's not entirely sure if he wants to laugh at this. "Huh-huh, yeah, ah... I think it's a shame that over in Britain it would be thought of as unusual. There are bad therapists of course. The fear of it is irrational. I find it very therapeutic and helpful."

Do you ever act out situations in public, mess around with them?

"As a game? Oh yeah. Act out my part when people don't know I'm acting, sure. Yeah. Ah, when my sister and I used to go to art classes at Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, I used to wait for a lift home by going up to people and pretending I knew them. 'Oh it's you! How *are* you? What are you doing *here*? My God, how long's it been? A year? Ten years!?' Yeah, that was, ah, fun."

GUZZLING

You're erratic, Jeff, er, impulsive, ridiculous, did you ever do something

"Am I in full control? What do you mean? I don't think of myself as weird or loopy..."



and death issues. The hard work of working out what the fly would be, etcetera, how it behaved, that was the only fun about it. I looked at one fly in a plastic bag for a week, that's all. It died."

Do flies have a soul?

"Er, well... mmmm, ah... ah, what do you mean? What do you think?"

Maybe you made it look possible.

"Do you think *we* do?"

Well, are they aware of happiness and unhappiness, as some animals evidently are?

"Gosh... mmmmm. Doubt it. Possible. Good question."

Moving to *Beyond Therapy* (which, I didn't confess, is unwatchably awful, Goldblum apart), do you know much about therapy?

"Yes, ah, yeah, I've had psychotherapy. The film has a different viewpoint on the subject than I do, actually. I don't think it's the craziest thing in the world. I've had good experiences and I continue to go when I can. I sure do! He's just a guy to talk to, like a confessor, yeah, a buddy. Somebody you can talk to without having to reciprocate interest in him. Entirely truthful, summing up the things that are on my mind, things

really rash – jump into the river off Waterloo Bridge, anything madly rash?

"In acting or in life? In life? Ah, I don't know. Wait! Wait! I got married! In Vegas! The only night in my life I've ever been in Las Vegas. We went for a weekend, Geena and I, had dinner to celebrate my birthday and said, 'What? Do you want to get married or what?' I said, 'Hey, do you want to get married' and Geena said, 'Yes, let's go.' Went right over there and then. It was sexy."

She's a very sexy woman, your wife.

"I think so too! We met on the set of this film *Transylvania 6-5000*. Love at first sight!"

So what do you like about your life, Jeff?

"God! God, where can I start? Can't you see? All over... I ah, mean, er... a whole lot of things, there are people all over the world that are not eating, they're starving. So anything up from that is very lucky... and, ah, fortunate. I, ah, I have work I care about that I really want to do, that I'm passionate about. I have a wife who is wonderful in every way *imaginable*. I'm crazy about her and she seems keen on me. I have a great sister, a terrific artist, my family. I'm in a great hotel here... I spend my time working or painting, reading. I've got the next film lined up in Madrid [*Dream Of A Mad Monkey*], I don't feel frustrated about not directing or anything like that. No, I've no burning desire to direct."

I can't wait, Jeff, to see you nude in your next film.

"Well, you just do it and concentrate on the imaginary circumstances. Do it as if it were totally private and act as if it's not true."

How can you tell the difference between being shy and awkward about chatting up someone or doing a nude scene, and being a good actor who knows how to *act* chatting up someone and doing a nude scene. Which is really you?

"Acting can lose that barrier, that's true. Acting, ah, ah, made me the person I am! Acting can intensify life and be a very freeing experience. I think I'd have been a different person if I wasn't an actor."

What sort of person might you have been?

"Gee, I don't know, but I might have been, ah, *cool*."

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film



Bonnie Vaughan on successful women, male bonding, and the American history of blood in a busy month in film.

A funny thing happened on the way to the foyer. Three companions and I had just emerged from the West End screening of *WORKING GIRL*. We stood huddled in a group just outside the theatre doors, animatedly discussing in disbelieving, sneering tones the film we had just seen. As we jabbered and gesticulated, a short, elderly gentleman with thick glasses emerged from the crowd and swooped towards us with his arms outstretched. "It's only a fantasy! Enjoy! Enjoy!" he beseeched. And he scuttled off as mysteriously as he had come, leaving us confused and speechless. Was he right?



Were we taking it all too seriously? Should we walk into the cinema fully prepared to suspend our disbelief for the next 120 minutes and simply 'enjoy'? We lobbied these questions around for a few minutes, pondered them carefully, and concluded as one. "Naaaahhh!"

Working Girl is a frothy romantic comedy, directed by Mike Nichols, which uses a careerist-minded secretary's struggle to succeed on Wall Street as its flimsy premise. Melanie Griffith stars as Tess, an unsophisticated but ambitious Staten Island-bred secretary. (With a tacky Farrah Fawcett hairstyle and gaudy eyeshadow, Griffith indeed looks truly awful in the opening scenes – like an even chubbier Bette Midler). In the hope of a promotion, she submits ideas to her chic but hard-bitten boss Katherine (Sigourney Weaver), who in turn plans to steal them. Conveniently, Katherine breaks her leg skiing and becomes laid-up for two weeks, enabling Tess to borrow her boss's clothes, restyle her hair and refine her squawky 'dem, dese 'n' dose' accent in order to pass herself off as an executive and clinch a deal with the help of Wall Street whiz Jack Trainer (Harrison Ford).

This kind of screwball comedy is the stuff of classics. I can easily picture a

Forties version with Carole Lombard in Griffith's role, Katherine Hepburn in Weaver's and Cary Grant in Ford's, directed by Howard Hawks or George Cukor. (In fact, there was a recent TV showing of *Separate Beds*, Arthur Hiller's 1963 comedy about a woman on Wall Street starring Lee Remick and James Garner.) Back then, a comedy like this could have got away with anything. Today, however, certain issues need to be addressed, and a sharp sense of irony is essential. Both are missing. The biting social satire that many of Nichols' previous films are known for (*The Graduate* and *Carnal Knowledge*, to name but two) is completely absent in *Working Girl*. Tess succeeds only because she flutters her eyes at the men she wants to do business with and purrs seductively. "You're ace, and I wanted the best." It is always flattery of men that opens her doors.

Weaver's bitchy character, as one of the few women to have made it, is embarrassing, ridiculous and one-dimensional. I wonder what kind of comment this is supposed to be on the successful careerwoman of today? Is she a figure to be ridiculed? Does Successful Woman equal Mirthless Ice-queen? Weaver handles her role with a total lack of irony, an opinion confirmed by the reaction of the audience I saw it with, who snorted in a most superior manner at her idiotic lines. Meanwhile, Griffith, with her goo-goo eyes and gaa-gaa voice, lends about as much credibility to her rise to executive prominence as squirty Michael J Fox did in *The Secret Of My Success*. And for this, she may win an Oscar.

And another thing. Why, oh why does Ms Griffith – like Greta Scacchi and Amanda Donohoe – insist on flaunting her tits in every movie she ever makes? In *Working Girl*, she spends an inordinate amount of time onscreen in bra, knickers and suspenders, buttocks to camera, and in one scene (apparently her own idea) she is seen hovering in knickers and stilts only, boobs aloft. Looking puffy and slightly bloated, Griffith obviously wasn't in the best ever shape during the shooting of this film, so why in heaven's name draw so much attention to her body? (Her line "I have a mind for business and a bod for sin" got a good derisive snort laugh in my row).

These gripes aside, there are some very funny farcical moments in *Working Girl*, a superb comic performance by Joan Cusack as Griffith's garish Noo Yawk buddy and Ford is endearing as the bewildered love interest. But expect nothing more than a mindless romp.

Much of *Working Girl*'s moral dilemma is focused on the fact that Tess is 30, still unmarried and merely a secretary (Weaver is meant to be 29 – Hah! One can't be expected to suspend their disbelief that far, surely). Similar issues are addressed in *CROSSING DELANCEY*, another lightweight romantic comedy. Amy Irving plays Isabel Grossman, a single publishing assistant in her thirties whose well-meaning but overbearing Jewish grandmother employs a matchmaker, Hannah Mandelbaum (played with exhausting ethnic relish by Sylvia Miles), to find her a suitable husband. Mandelbaum comes up with a nice eligible pickle manufacturer (a nice performance by Peter Riegert, best remembered as the Yank in *Local Hero*), but of course Isabel, being a modern, independent woman, isn't interested.

Now, my mother, who lives in America, just loved this film – she enthusiastically described it to me as a "Jewish Moonstruck". Sorry, ma, but it doesn't come close. *Crossing Delancey* plods along as Isabel sways back and forth between her attraction to a pretentious novelist and her guilt for not returning the pickleman's obvious affections, with grandma and Mandelbaum meddling shamelessly throughout. One of the biggest problems here is Irving, who is too bland to be true. Her Isabel constantly simpers and apologises and comes across

as utterly unassertive – a far cry from the independent woman she is made out to be. Halfway through this film, I didn't care who she damn well married, as long as she quit hovering uncertainly in those irritating Laura Ashley dresses and just got on with it. Exceedingly dull – and, I'm afraid, what my mother calls 'cute'.

Another independent, thirtiesish careerwoman features at the core of *TEQUILA SUNRISE*. Written and directed by Robert Towne, this, like *Working Girl*, boasts one hell of a casting coup, starring Hollywood hot properties Mel Gibson, Michelle Pfeiffer and Kurt Russell. But for all its star potential, *Tequila Sunrise* never sizzles. In a terribly disjointed and dragging storyline, Pfeiffer plays the owner of a fashionable LA restaurant who becomes unwittingly embroiled in a conflict between Russell and Gibson, best friends since high school who have grown up to become a cop and a drug dealer respectively.

All beautiful sunset hues, huge flattering close-ups, long scenes of lingering eye-contact and much waffling on about Friendship, *Tequila Sunrise* is a huge disappointment from the man who wrote and cowrote some of the most memorable films of the last decade (*The Last Detail*, *Chinatown* and *Shampoo* are among his considerable credits). It is hard to believe that this same person is



Cocooned by the fluffy sentimental bulk of audience goodwill earned during the big run of *Big*, Tom Hanks has a head start. We think we're going to like him. As Steven Gold, *PUNCHLINE*'s bouncy if angst-ridden centre, we do. Hanks is the medical student turned smalltime stand-up star. Opposite him, as a ho-ho-ho-housewife balancing comic career against family routine, is Sally Field. In her Brooklyn kitchen is husband John Goodman, who has wandered in from the *Roseanne* set with barely a change of script or waistline. (In the usual way of Hollywood, he ultimately acquires his New Man credentials by spending one full, uninterrupted evening with his spouse).

There can be few better opportunities for cinematic tension than the insane rehearsed spontaneity of public comedy. From this starting point – the joy of being good and the true horror of being bad – *Punchline* makes its intelligent way through a plot of personal success, personal responsibility and drunken heckling. In the background, shadowy and besuited, is the Comic Big Time – Las Vegas, TV and I've-just-flown-in-boy-are-my-arms-tired. In the foreground, the smokey little community at the Gas Station comedy club, and the unstable relationship between neurotic old hand Hanks, and twitchy apprentice Fields. Script, direction and fine performances (many by bona fide stand-up comedians) conspire to create a suprising masterpiece. ● IAN PARKER



"I like taking the point of view of people others don't cotton to," director Paul Schrader has said. "Like a psychopathic cabbie, a slick gigolo, a thug boxer, a suicidal homosexual novelist, a newspaper heiress." To be sure, Schrader's *PATTY HEARST* will ruffle a few ethical feathers. Set in 1974 and based on Hearst's autobiography *Every Secret Thing*, Schrader's version has an innocent 19-year-old Hearst struggling to survive kidnapping by the Symbionese Liberation Army, a small bunch of renegade radicals. Precluding questions about the victim's responsibility, all sympathy is extended to a young woman's battle for sanity – a battle the real Patty did not entirely win.

Surrealistic lighting and claustrophobic sets focus the narrative on Hearst's perceptions. Raped ("It is comradely to say yes to sex," she is told), brainwashed and tormented, she spends fifty-seven days blindfolded in various closets. "Don't examine your feelings," she reminds herself in desperation, "they're no help at all." From the moment her blindfold comes off, Hearst is a criminal – she doesn't try to escape from the terrorists. Instead, she robs a bank and goes to prison.

Flashbacks, docudrama footage and tinted dream sequences provide the mind-bending atmosphere, while Natasha Richardson tackles the difficult leading role with freshness and ease. Despite a minuscule budget of \$4.5 million and a four-week shooting schedule, *Patty Hearst* is evocative, concise and truly thrilling – an excellent example of Schrader's imaginative direction. ● KAREN KRIZANOVICH

responsible for the dreadfully lifeless dialogue featured here (which, peculiarly, features an extraordinary amount of name-dropping of fancy pasta dishes).

Pfeiffer, in playing a beautiful, hardworking woman who inexplicably hides her emotions, is described by Towne as having a "Grace Kelly cool". I hardly think that delivering all your lines in a measured monotone qualifies any actress for such a coveted comparison as that. I think 'anaesthetised' is a better description. Russell is annoyingly slick and smarmy, and Gibson, while undeniably a smouldering presence, renders a halting American delivery reminiscent of a particularly bad John Wayne impression. I kept waiting for the story to pick up, but it never did – except for some welcome comic relief courtesy of an exuberant Raul Julia as a drug baron disguised as an FBI agent. Also amusing is a very (unintentionally) funny slapping scene between Gibson and Pfeiffer which is straight out of *Chinatown's* famous "She's my sister!" [slap] "Daughter!" [slap] sequence.

In all its stylistic glory, however, I'm sure the only thing this film will leave us with is the introduction into film journalese of the phrase 'tequila sunrise' as an adjective. I've already seen one article which describes Nick Nolte's hair as "tequila-sunrise orange". What next?

"Dennis Quaid was in a particularly tequila-sunrise mood that day," or "Emily Lloyd's tequila-sunrise enthusiasm was wonderfully infectious"?

Certainly *TWINS*, in presenting Danny DeVito as a freewheeling Casanova, is bound to leave an unpleasant trend in its wake – that of short, obnoxious actors being cast in leading romantic roles. The teaming of Arnold Schwarzenegger and DeVito as longlost twins was undoubtedly a brilliant idea on paper. Oh, how the studio executives must have toppled off their leather seats when this one was being passed around. I can just imagine the pitch. "They're the product of an experiment involving six superior male specimens, see, whose collective sperm is injected into a beautiful young woman. But then she has twins! And they're different as night and day! That's where Arnie and Danny come in... So one gets sent to an orphanage where he grows up nasty, and the other goes to a South Seas island to develop his intellect and physique. And then they meet thirty-five years later and find they have all these things in common, even though they look nothing alike! And they set off together to find their mama!"

Great, right? Wrong. Believe me, the joke of these two complete physical opposites sharing the same genes and habits wears thin mighty fast. Only so

many laughs can be wrung from watching Big Arnie and Dwarfie Danny eating or scratching or pissing in synchronisation. Or of Danny teaching Arnie about the facts of life and how to dance. Or Arnie getting Danny out of scrapes with his hoodlum acquaintances. Or both Danny and Arnie getting caught up in a gratuitous subplot designed to get those guns and car chases in. The demographic target of *Twins* is obviously the prepubescent audience. This is no adult comedy, and the fact that it took \$90,000,000 at the box office in the States says something rather dubious about the collective mentality over there. I mean, how many 12-year-olds can there possibly be to have made this movie such a smash? It's positively scary.

There has been a proliferation of brother movies lately. *Rain Man* – reviewed last month – like *Twins*, features a naïf and a hustler showing each other the way; it also features a scene of one teaching the other how to dance. And *NICKY AND GINO* is a tale of twin brothers that also has a similar theme to *Rain Man* – one brother is mentally handicapped – as well as a touching dancing scene. It all begins to

Gino is offered a place at a California university, he begins to question whether he can leave Nicky on his own, and, much to Gino's mounting frustration, a series of rather severely unfortunate events indicate that Nicky is indeed incapable of looking after himself.

While the story and the outcome are well on the syrupy side, the performances in *Nicky And Gino* are outstanding – particularly Hulce as the man-child Nicky. His totally unselfconscious performance is both moving and convincing – much more so, I think, than Dustin Hoffman's very studied Raymond in *Rain Man*.

Two very different political films out this month are Alan Parker's *MISSISSIPPI BURNING* and Alex Cox's *WALKER*. The former is the much-publicised fictional account of the killing in 1964 of three civil rights workers by the Ku Klux Klan. The film was reviewed by Hugh Morley at length in last month's *BLITZ*, accompanied by Parker's own detailed production notes, which should be essential handouts at every showing of this movie. There's really little more that I can add, apart from saying that this bold and effective work from Parker –



seem like déjà vu after a while. (Next month comes *Miles From Home*, another brothers movie starring Richard Gere, but the similarity ends there, thank God.)

Nicky And Gino is a largely sentimental story set in Pittsburgh, starring Tom Hulce as Dominick, the victim of a childhood accident which has left him 'slow'. He works as a garbageman to help put his protective brother, Eugene (Ray Liotta), through medical school. When

buddy/white hero element and gung-ho resolve notwithstanding – and its excellent, intelligent performances make for a highly disturbing but very necessary film that should not be missed. It is curiously ironic that it took an Englishman to make it.

It again takes an Englishman to explore another chapter of America's dark history in *Walker*, finally released here over a year after its American debut. A searing

THE DEAD POOL is presumably the last and certainly the least of Clint Eastwood's excursions as renegade cop 'Dirty' Harry Callahan. Its greatest flaw is that it spends too much time either trying to score moral Brownie points or making heavy-handed in-jokes about other movies. As a result, the weak and unnecessarily convoluted plot – concerning a psychopath who is picking off a selection of San Francisco celebrities – is thoroughly buried underneath a mound of distracting red herrings. Targets include film critics, the sensationalism of the media, political whitewashing, drug abuse, *Friday The 13th*-style slasher movies and rock stars, amongst many others. Liam Neeson pops up as a low-budget horror film director; there's a clever sight-gag (drawn out much too long) involving a remote control model car, which pokes fun at the classic chase from Steve McQueen's *Bullitt*; and there's a lousy and entirely unsuspenseful climax in which Eastwood spears someone with a harpoon. Time to hang up that Magnum. ● TOM ELIOT

▷ political satire written by Rudy Wurlitzer and blazing with Cox's idiosyncratic anarchic style, *Walker* is based on the true story of William Walker, the American adventurer who ruled as the self-appointed president of Nicaragua from 1856–57. Played with steely-eyed bravura by Ed Harris (who gave a memorable performance in *The Right Stuff* as John Glenn), Walker invades Nicaragua with a motley group of fifty-eight men and the aim to stabilise the country, which is in the throes of a civil war. A total imperialist fanatic and full of dangerous contradictions, he launches one outrageous campaign after another in his quest for power and 'justice'.

Walker has to be one of America's most ridiculous, and most overlooked, historical characters, and Cox and Wurlitzer present his tale with not a small amount of irony and piss-take. Deliberate anachronisms abound, the wit is deadly, the political commentary ruthless, and the whole shambles is depicted with Peckinpahlike relish (blood spurts liberally in slow motion). 'Offbeat' doesn't come close to describing *Walker*. There are moments when it all seems a little too out of control, too left of field, but the observations always sting.



During her lifetime, Camille Claudel's work and her notorious affair with the great sculptor Auguste Rodin caused considerable uproar within Parisian society. Almost fifty years after her death, two differing films have been made of her life, each purporting to be true. The first to appear here is Bruno Nuytten's *CAMILLE CLAUDEL* – already nominated for twelve French Oscars, and boasting a starry cast headed by Isabelle Adjani and Gérard Depardieu.

Award-winning cinematographer Nuytten's first attempt at direction shows us a Claudel increasingly in chiaroscuro as she spirals into a passionate madness caused by the conflation of love and work. Beyond the love story of a talented woman eclipsed by a famous man, *Camille Claudel* is also a three-hour-long battle of the sexes in which each side loses. She is talented but requires help; he is acclaimed but fading in imagination. Both are ambitious. In the end, the female is sacrificed yet again – locking herself away to concentrate on her own sculpting, creating hundreds of figures, she sends cat shit instead of art to high government officials. Had she been a man, she would have been 'eccentric'. As an unmarried woman from a respectable family, she is seen instead as 'insane'.

The film shows Adjani as she has never been seen before – seething, strong and ferocious, in a superb performance. In fact, she put up some of her own money to finance the film, and the Claudel family image was softened in the movie in order to gain access to Camille's papers. This is an epic heartbreaker scrutinising the two obsessions of love and work and how they can destroy. Definitely the film to see if you're having a power struggle with your own soulmate. ● KAREN KRIZANOVICH

Ken Russell's *LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM* is a dreadfully feeble parody of culty horror films, and what seems little more than a self-indulgent, money-wasting home movie. From where I was sitting, any form of wit was entirely lacking in this effort, much of which seemed like a crappy self-parody of the director's earlier works such as *The Devils* and *Mahler*. I came out of the theatre feeling like I'd missed the whole 'joke'. A reliable source informed me that if you knew Ken Russell, you'd think it was funny. I suggest, therefore, that Mr Russell attends every one of this film's showings and takes the entire audience out for a drink afterwards in order to let them all get to know him. Then maybe everyone will get the joke.

Paul Morley talks to the man himself at phenomenal length elsewhere in this issue, and I think he got the joke, so for a further report on this film, you'd better turn to him. All I have to say is that Catherine Oxenburgh's dubbing is particularly bad, and not even in a funny, kitschy way. It is rumoured that the reason she was dubbed is because she was so hopeless at getting the Black Country accent down, but when I called producer Renaldo Vasconcelas' office to confirm that information, I received an icy, "No



Like *The Hidden* and *RoboCop*, *ALIEN NATION* is yet another blend of crime and science fiction, part of a peculiarly enjoyable hybrid genre. Here, 300,000 humanoid aliens ('newcomers') have crash-landed in California and been semi-assimilated into the LA community, Ellis Island-style. The ageing James Caan plays a cop whose partner is killed by an alien; of course, another alien – LA's first 'newcomer' detective – takes the deceased's place, changing Caan from the worst alienist in town to a swell guy. An ordinary buddy-cop flick spiked with bad puns – Mandy Patinkin's alien cop has taken the earthly name Sam Francisco – and small extra-terrestrial twists, *Alien Nation* features good performances from Caan and Patinkin – particularly since the latter, along with the omnipresent Terence Stamp, has to act from under two inches of latex makeup. ● KAREN KRIZANOVICH

comment.' Says it all, really...

Thank goodness Jeff Goldblum gets to play an American in Mel Smith's, *THE TALL GUY*, or else we might have been treated to some more bad dubbing – or at least another effort from the Dick Van Dyke School of Cockney, like Bridget Fonda in *Scandal* or Harry Dean Stanton in *Mr North*. Usually I get carried away over the gratuitous placement of Americans in British films, but this one is a very happy exception. Apparently the filmmakers were originally looking for 'an English Jeff Goldblum' to play the lead in this story of Dexter King, a lanky out-of-work actor who falls passionately in love with a headstrong nurse. When they decided to go straight for Goldblum himself, and he accepted the role, the part was slightly rewritten to accommodate his Americanness, and the title was changed from *Camden Town Boy* to *The Tall Guy*.

And it works brilliantly. Goldblum is a wonderful comic actor – with a silly mop of hair, goofy expressions and slow drawl, he's something of a cross between James Stewart and Emo Phillips – and *The Tall Guy* is delightfully funny. Mel Smith makes his directorial debut, and Richard Curtis, who wrote the screenplay, has based the story on an unrequited fantasy of his own days as an unemployed (short) actor. Rowan Atkinson plays himself as the vain, pompous Ron Anderson, star of the Rubber Face Revue, in which King plays stooge. Subtitled 'A Sort Of Love Story', *The Tall Guy* follows King through his repeatedly feeble attempts to win over haughty Nurse Lemon (played by Emma Thompson), his sacking from the revue and his various failed auditions around town until he

finally lands the lead in *Elephant* – *The Musical*. But then he loses the girl.

The Tall Guy contains some hilarious moments – King stuttering out in American monotone, "N-n-no, uh, you fuck off" for his Steven Berkoff audition; his sexually insatiable flatmate and her dizzying succession of naked men to-ing and fro-ing from her bedroom; the chorusline in *Elephant* comprising twelve tap-dancing, pink-suited elephants and its Sarah Brightmanlike female lead. Not surprisingly, many scenes have the feel of individual, self-contained skits. It would certainly make a fantastic weekly TV comedy series (a feeling emphasised by a *Young Ones*–type music break, featuring Suggs of Madness and cast singing *It Must Be Love*). As it stands, however, it's a mighty enjoyable, laugh-a-minute movie. I only wish that little man with the thick glasses had been in the foyer as my friends and I left this screening. He would have seen us madly grinning from ear to ear.

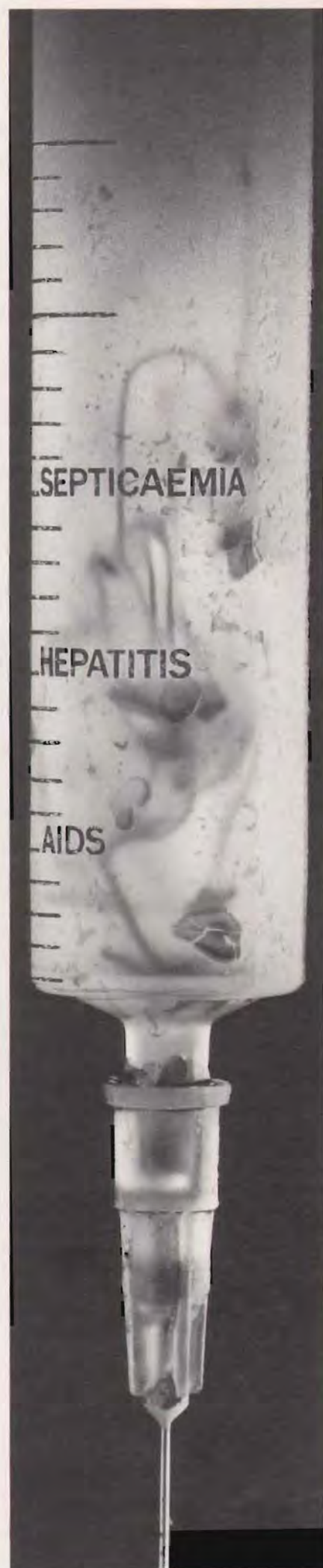


*Screw up
your blood,
your liver,
your life.*

*One hit is all it takes.
You can't tell who's infected.
It could be your mate.
And if you share his works, it'll be you.
If you want to talk about it, call the
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Shooting up once can screw you up. Forever.



power

"I have not lost the desire to produce photographs and images, but I wonder more and more what purpose they serve." So bemoans photocolagist Pierre Guimond, one of seven Canadian photographers whose work is featured in the 'PowerPlays' exhibition currently running at Canada House in London. The other photographers exhibiting may not be as pessimistic as Guimond, but they share his concern for the growing lack of care in contemporary society. As its title suggests, the exhibition — curated by Rob Powell and first exhibited at Edinburgh's Stills Gallery — takes as its theme power in all its guises — nuclear, social, spiritual, natural. "Power is the ability to have things the way we want," claims Miklos Legrady. "Correctly used, it furthers one. Used accidentally, it is no longer constructive and can unfold in unpredictable forms that may work against the user..." It's a thought-provoking exercise. PowerPlays is at the Canadian Cultural Centre Gallery, Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London SW1 until April 28. TOM ELIOT



Miklos Legrady: from 'Catastrophe Theory'



Miklos Legrady: from 'Catastrophe Theory'



Miklos Legrady: from 'Catastrophe Theory'



Pierre Guimond



Pierre Guimond

ads



Mark Edwards on displaced sexual fantasy, endlines and cult objects.

I don't know what she does in that PEUGEOT 205 after the commercial's finished. I'm just glad I don't have to valet it for her afterwards. That 'See Me, Feel Me, Touch Me' ad is just one of the many recently which have been dominated by models lusting after cars – mainly little red non-Corvettes. It's safe to assume that these ads are created in male-dominated agencies where they understand that the sales figures show more women buying these cars than men, but can't quite get their heads round the idea that women might buy them for slightly different reasons. After all, the car as a displaced sexual fantasy is a particularly male problem. The only time women connect cars with the male sexual organ is when other road-users drive like one.

A pity that the idea and the execution are aiming at two different sexes, because Peugeot's tagline has all the confidence of the best of America's take-no-prisoners school of copywriting: COKE IS IT; REEBOK LET U.B.U.; PEUGEOT 205. LOVE IT.

Making up for questionable advertising with the occasional excellent endline is a bit of a habit of Peugeot's agency, HDM Horner Collis and Kirvan. It saved face after its controversial cornfield-on-fire TV extravaganza for the 405 with a press ad headlined, IF YOU WANT SOMETHING SENSIBLE BUY AN ANORAK. You could probably sell a car to men and women with that line. Now there's a thought.

The real way to a woman's heart? Well, VOLKSWAGEN score more marks than Peugeot with their Polo ad set in a healthfarm. Although it's stretching it a bit to fit the image of the woman eating a chocolate in her car to the campaign's endline of IF ONLY EVERYTHING IN LIFE WAS AS RELIABLE AS A VOLKSWAGEN. Does that mean that the car bought her the chocolates?

Possibly. Or at least you wouldn't put it past a car manufacturer to make the claim. The current batch of female-orientated ads follows pretty quickly on after a range of commercials aimed at men, all of which seemed to claim that their particular make of car had a computerised brain that tunc'd the car 100 times a second. Well, who's going to count?

There is one exception which is neither overly emotional (and therefore aimed at those emotional creatures, women) nor overly technical (and therefore aimed at men, who are all extremely engine-literate). It's not at all condescending and appears to be aimed at intelligent people. It's the other current VW ad. In general, you have to acknowledge that Volkswagen have the kind of unnatural hold over great

copywriting that, say, Bananarama have over the pop charts. It could clearly be any car. No one would put VWs forward as the ultimate marque. And yet, they always get the good ads.

They had the good luck to be with the right agency at the right time – Doyle Dane Bernbach in the States in the early Sixties – when a group of creatives with names like Koenig and Krone and Grace and Noble fashioned some of the greatest ads of all time for the Beetle.

But then they had the rare – the extremely rare – sense to stay with the one agency, even when it lost other business, became deeply unfashionable and went through a very unhappy merger. As



a result, they have built the kind of longterm relationship that continues to produce classic work – of a standard that's rarely equalled by other car manufacturers.

A man walks along a long, lonely road carrying an empty petrol can. Then he meets another man with another empty petrol can walking the opposite way. While they ponder what the hell they do next, a Volkswagen drives past. If only everything in life...

There's a moral here for all advertisers. Especially those with marketing departments which change agencies 100

times a second.

Those women not lusting after cars this month are apparently lusting after men's jeans, or what's inside them. (These are written by men too, right?) Thankfully, the new PEPE commercials, by Publicis, escape this route, going instead for a self-consciously avant-garde visual fronted by the self-consciously avant-garde Leigh Bowery. They should thus avoid the problem many advertisers hit when their stars start endorsing a range of other products, thus confusing the consumers. What other products could Leigh Bowery possibly endorse? Except maybe Clearasil.

The fact that the WEARS PEPE line wears thin very quickly is all to the good. Every time some parent zaps the ad in disgust – "not *this* again" – some kid is having the brand's positioning reinforced – an implied message along the lines of LEVI'S ARE SOMETHING YOUR DAD WEARS.

If Pepe are worn by 14-year-olds, LEVI'S are looking increasingly as if they're worn by people who want to go out with 14-year-olds. The latest in the 501's series by Bartle Bogle Hegarty is the weakest

positioning. The 'Identity Parade' commercial, which allows your prejudices to come to the fore, could easily have followed The Guardian's 'Skinhead' ad of a while back, where you first thought he was attacking a passer-by and later realised he was saving his life. It will hearten agencies and worry advertisers in many other product categories that The Guardian probably could and should have made this ad themselves, and that they might be in danger of losing some of their branding to The Independent simply because they haven't spent enough on advertising.

It's an accusation that can't be levelled against the financial sector, with banks, building societies and pensions companies spending more and more of their money to attract more and more of your money. The conventional wisdom among marketers is that the banks and related companies are actually having to offer customers what they want to secure their custom, just like retailers. There are two interesting implications of that: first that there will be more and more financial advertising, and second that marketers actually know where there are retailers who take a blind bit of notice of what their customers want.

The future of the actors from the Wrangler commercial is probably secure then, since they could easily graduate onto the 'real conversation' commercials favoured by financial advertisers.

"So, Mark, what you're saying is that commercials which portray 'real people' in 'real conversations' [significant pause] are unconvincing?"

Yes [another pause]. That's right [longer pause, but not too long]. Unconvincing.

"Good point, Mark. And nobody wants to be unconvincing [both smile]. But what do we do about it?"

I'm glad you asked me that. Here [pause]. Take a look at this.

"This?"

Yes, this.

"What is it?"

It's a strong visual image. Says more about your product than words ever can.

"A strong visual image. Hmmm... I like the sound of that. Or rather, I like the look of it [both laugh]. I'll take it."

Shall I wrap it for you?

"No thanks. I'll use it in the next paragraph."

Indeed, the agency responsible for the EAGLE STAR ads – in which in a totally random and spontaneous snatch of conversation people miraculously happen to list simply loads of their insurance schemes' great features – should be forced to sit down every morning to TV-am and watch the new CHEWITS ad. Created by Lowe Howard-Spink, the new commercial continues the 'Godzilla Meets King Kong' strategy, with the 'Muncher' causing even more destruction until he discovers Chewits. Of course, you couldn't possibly apply lessons learned in confectionery advertising to the marketing of financial products. Could you? O

To order either or both items, simply mark your selection on the coupon and return it to us with your cheque made payable to **BLITZ MAGAZINE**, addressed to **THE BLITZ COLLECTION, BLITZ MAGAZINE, 40-42 NEWMAN STREET, LONDON W1P 3PA**. Alternatively you may quote your **VISA** card number. **OVERSEAS PRICES** are as follows: **BLITZ Watch** – Europe £33.00; USA and rest of world £35.00/\$65. **BLITZ Zippo** – Europe £21.00; USA and rest of world £23.00/\$46. Cheques and money orders must be in pounds sterling only. We cannot accept monies drawn on foreign currencies, except for US dollars when drawn on a cheque from a bank with a London branch. Please ask your bank for details.



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media



Paul Mathur on cab etiquette.

Parents never tell you about cabs. Birds, bees and the horrors of gentlemen in raincoats are all dutifully explained, but never that gut-wrenching, soul-destroying feeling when a black cab eases past you in the early morning rain. In an ideal world, any education you receive whilst bounced on a parental knee should include a warning about never being tempted to even *think* about hailing a cab. "Watch it, kiddo, they'll be the death of you. Mark my words."

The death of us indeed, but would we ever have listened? Wrinkly admonitions tend to amble to the back of the mind the first time you see one of those huge, impractically shaped vehicles rolling by. Like a front room on wheels, with a sleek, spotless shell and an amber jewel studded upfront. They don't look like they can top twenty miles an hour – and your cab future will prove that they can't – but in that first glimpse it won't matter. All you'll want to do will be to snuggle into its homey interior, hug to some farflung corner of the world and wonder whether they need planning permission for every part of town they visit.

How soon the glamour crumbles, the luxury turns to despair! In Medialand, the cab becomes merely a tool, like a Pison Organiser or a Swiss Army Knife with one of those attachments for getting people out of meetings or feet out of mouths. The impracticality remains – it's quicker to get a tube, or indeed to walk on one's hands – but the arm still springs into hailing mode as soon as you get near a kerb. In a few short years a cab stops being a place of worship and starts to be a knee-jerk necessity, an addiction.

"I'm hooked on cabs," a colleague told me. "After a while you stop thinking about why you use them and just leap into any that you see. I got one to go two hundred yards to a pub once."

Despite their constant use, cabs have become an object of disdain, and not without reason. And much of the blame has to lie with the drivers, a dangerously unique breed of frothing lunatics. *Private Eye's* 'A Cab Driver Speaks' column is, if anything, too soft, suggesting that some form of lucid thought flashes through their minds before they decide that hanging is to good for the majority of the non-cab-driving population. One gets the impression that to become a cab driver it is less important to have The Knowledge than to be able to spout instinctively on any subject plucked from the sky whilst still assiduously avoiding a valid, reasonable opinion.

The average cab driver's solution to the world's problems makes Auschwitz look

like a five-star hotel. A random sampling last week gleaned the collective opinion that 'yer world would be a better place' if someone killed the Ayatollah, Salman Rushdie, Russians, Americans, women drivers, criminals, the English football team, weathermen, shopkeepers, commuters, everyone in the immediate vicinity of Oxford Street, Sue Lawley, the French, people who hate the French... and that was before the meter had even started ticking over. Some valid targets admittedly, but it's the breadth of their hatred that takes the breath away. In a cab driver's mind, *everyone* is a bastard unless they're prepared to come forward and prove otherwise.



So why do we rush like lemmings to the company of these certifiable old duffers? And what's more, why do we insist on paying for the privilege? Perhaps it harks back to soggy days of youth made golden in the glow of nostalgia – interminable car journeys with the folks looked back on as luxuriantly chauffeured journeys into the unknown. Admittedly, after half an hour stuck in a cab in a traffic jam, with the entire contents of your wallet ticking away in front of your eyes, you begin to question the value of nostalgia. Perhaps the only reason you take cabs is to prove you're as stupid as the driver.

The contract with a cab driver is a curiously masochistic one. Where else can you pay over the odds to sit in a box in

the middle of the street and watch the old and infirm plod by at what seems like breakneck speed, whilst a lunatic driver assaults you with the pros and pros of bringing back National Service.

And then there's the interminable list of restrictions. They're not obliged to make a journey of more than six miles, because horses in the olden days couldn't make more than a twelve-mile-round journey. Now correct me if I'm wrong, but the streets of Britain are hardly thronging with horse-drawn Hackney carriages, and any motor vehicle that runs out of puff after a mere six miles doesn't seem the best bet as a reliable form of transport. Let them test themselves. Leap into the back seat and insist on being taken to Birmingham City Centre. If the driver refuses, say, "Yeah, I can't blame you, it does look a bit of a rosey old banger." If there's one thing a cabbie hates more than going anywhere, it's people making fun of his jalopy. He's bound to take you. Of course, you'll then be stranded in Birmingham with a bill the size of a South American country's national debt, but you'll have made a valuable point.

with variations on theme of, 'I've got asthma and I'll die right now if you so much as mention cigarettes', a tactic that would never work here since it would look too much like a dare. If you do get a cab driver who threatens to expire, demand that he holds his breath. After all, he's only going six miles.

Increasingly, black cabs are being threatened for trade by unlicensed minicabs, the latter even worse than their legitimate big brothers. The drivers, robbed of the plexiglass barricade between them and their passengers, use the opportunity to handy even more outlandish philosophical discourses around the shabby interior. One driver recently asked a friend whether she had ever considered killing anyone – not a request as such, just a stray thought that had surfaced in his addled mind. Another always says, "£1,000" when asked how much the journey has cost, a demand made less peculiar when you realise the circuitous route that he, like most minicabs, insists on taking. I bet when he gets home he can't go from one room to another without shinning down a

The precise details of the metering system are as lost in the mists of time as the minds of the drivers. £1.00 for the first mile, 20p for each ensuing 431 yards, twelvence ha'penny for every alternate twelve yards over 300 feet, 50p if you're carrying luggage, £100 if you look vaguely Arabian, 30 percent of the final fare added on for every time zone you pass through, double the number you first thought of... don't even think about it, just pay and leave.

More recently the THANK YOU FOR NOT SMOKING sign has come into vogue, a demand that is far from legally binding and indeed can tempt even the most fervent anti-smoker to whip out a packet of Untipped Capstans. In New York, cab drivers go for the sympathy vote

drainpipe and re-entering through the back garden.

Finally, tipping. A bugger this one, since no set percentage is universally accepted, other than a couple of quid more than you are prepared to offer. Do you round £4.30 to £5.00, £5.50, £6.00 or just proffer your house and possessions? Even then they'll probably say they haven't got change.

Cabs are slow, expensive and painful, but they'll be here for ever. We'll pay our money, bide our time and listen a million more times to grubby theories about castrating liberals. And when we finally slip from the mortal coil, the large, stately hearse dawdling at the front of the funeral cortege will bear a golden beacon and a neat, simple message. Not For Hire. O



teechers^{sp}

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art



Andrew Renton on the new spirit in Italian art.

One of the most celebrated artists currently working in Milan is Scherzi the scottie dog, who chews on pieces of plastic which are then displayed as works of art. He also lifts dumbbells as a leisure activity, and gives interviews – with subtitles – on Italian television. Scherzi is the partner (for want of a better word) of the brightest star in the Milanese fashion firmament, Cinzia Ruggieri. Signora Ruggieri is something of a performance piece in herself as she goes about her daily works. Her major fashion statement might well be the gentleman's suit that comes complete with coathanger attached to the arm. When the handsome *ragazzo* takes his leading *ragazza* to an overcrowded Milanese equivalent of the loft-party, this sultry beauty can hang her wrap or coat

efficiently on her man's arm with the confidence that it will always be by her side, without a single crease to taint that immaculate *bella figura*.

To say that style is important to Italian life is like saying that Giorgio Armani is a moderately successful fashion designer. The case is severely understated. Or to put it another way, style is to the Milanese what froth is to cappuccino – absolutely essential for the effect but... how much substance?

The year's most stylish gathering so far in Milan's artistic demimonde (both for viewers and participants) must have been the 'Premio Saatchi & Saatchi per Giovani Artisti' (or the Saatchi & Saatchi competition for young artists). Over a thousand artists resident in Italy between

the ages of 18 and 35 submitted examples of their work to a jury of internationally eminent critics. Forty artists were chosen from these to have one piece of their work displayed, of which three received prizes worth Lire 10 million each (approximately £4300).

We have nothing in this country that could compare with the scale and significance of this competition and exhibition (ironically enough, organised and curated by the very British Phoebe Tait). The Saatchi name carries huge weight in the world of contemporary art. However, this was an independent initiative by the Italian agency, rather than at the instigation of the Saatchis as private art patrons. This is not simply an efficient PR exercise to stock up the Saatchi's London gallery. On the contrary, the commitment is, in this instance, to 'the creative principle'. The result is a show that is not tucked quietly away in a darkened suburb of the town, but presented with great flair in the recently revitalised Palazzo delle Stelline.

But what to make of the work on display? It must be said that even the Italian critics were baffled. In an article entitled 'The Young Ones And The Game Of Art', the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* kept an uncritical distance. "It is always most difficult [to deal] with the art of our young ones," sighed their reporter, clearly too old to deal with all of this conceptualism. "Pop-art, conceptualism, structuralism and minimalism converge together with otherisms difficult to describe."

If this exhibition is representative of the current state of the Italian art scene, then we must wave a tearful farewell to Post-Modernism. As predicted in these pages some months ago, we are all very definitely Neo- or Late-Modernists now. But perhaps it's unfair to tag these artists with a name so soon in the day. What can be said, however, is that this show goes at least one stage beyond the huge reassessment of 20th-century Italian art currently in residence at London's Royal Academy. The last great Italian movement was *la transavanguardia* of ten or so years ago. The term was coined by Achille Bonito Oliva to define the re-emergence of the figurative in art. At its simplest level this meant some very handsome paintings of some very handsome mythical, classical-type figures. This new art was moderately accessible, and the art commodity market promptly hit boom-time.

But now, along comes a new collection of work which seems to connect more positively with a different generation of artists, most specifically the conceptual *Arte povera* group of the late Sixties. In fact, much of the work on show at the Palazzo defies an immediate response. There is no material that has not been manhandled, and expectations are quite subverted. There is the shower curtain on wheels that opens on one side to reveal a mirror; or the cast-iron radiator strapped to the ground by cord. There are two iron poles, 1.7 metres high, each placed in its own glass filled with water. This is a

subtly kinetic sculpture – it rusts. The prize-winning *Motocicletta* is an oversize wheelbarrow-type construction; and then there are the egg shells glued back into an egg carton. One newspaper queried whether some of the shells were deliberately broken or merely the result of over-zealous merrymaking at the preview party. I am sorry to report that the latter is probably the case. Picture a sheepish critic from a major newspaper trying to make himself inconspicuous having just trodden on the new spirit in Italian art.

One cannot help but sense that much of the exhibition is a self-conscious commentary on the art-market in which Doris and Charles Saatchi have participated so thoroughly. Owing much to the American Peter Halley, Marco Cincolini presented a painting of a flow diagram where great industrial names such as ITT and AEG are all directed towards the central figure of that Mecca of contemporary art institutions in New York, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). Vincenzo Chiarandà and Giuseppe Melatti, meanwhile – under the pseudonymous title of a business company, *Premiata Ditta* – create pie-charts, graphs and company reports in a simulacrum of formal objectivity. The very serious-looking documents which they disseminate give little or nothing away about themselves. Some would say that most corporations massage figures and veil the truth in the same way. *Premiata Ditta* perpetuate this as the *business* of art.

Other works avoided coldness and sterility despite using the most unpromising materials. Christine Brandi's *Circolazione dell'Acqua* was awarded a Special Mention by the judges. A dark, curved casing opens from above giving off steam. The steam is rechannelled through the back of the construction into the mysterious mechanics inside. It's hard to say quite how efficient a machine it is technically, but it does succeed in creating a sense of an organic presence, breathing but hiding behind its protective metal shell. Nobuko Maeyama's *Cilindro 13* (again a Special Mention) also gave an organic quality to quite functional, synthetic materials. Black and blue plastic bags (like binliners) are filled and stacked, sausage-like, and then forcibly compressed



Nobuko Maeyama's 'Cilindro 13'



Gregorio Spini's plexiglass 'Bicchiera'



by some means into a cylindrical shape. What remains is the tension of the mould that formed the structure but which now exists only in the impression it has left.

Gregorio Spini would get my vote as the nicest human being in the Saatchi Premio. Formerly a mime artist, he moved from "working with invisible objects to creating them". Spini paints liquid plexiglas onto sheet plexiglas. The creation casts its own shadows within the space it occupies, barely present, but

The title translates as 'log-books' or 'account-books' and explains that what appears to be a pictorial representation – a sea of barely interrupted black – is not painted at all, but rather cleverly manipulated found objects.

Massimo Kaufman, meanwhile, takes well-known works of western culture and re-interprets them at their most abstract level. *Allons Enfants!* reproduces photographically a section of David's *Crowning Of Napoleon* juxtaposed with a small brass weight at its side. This weight effectively completes the picture, restoring and emphasising the balance of the original. In a similar way, Kaufman's obsessive reworking of the proportions of *The Annunciation*, for example, binds him to a cultural past that sought an ideal mean of representation. His work is effectively an analysis of prior cultures, whilst at the same time self-consciously analysing itself and its own forms. I would like to go on record as the first human being in this country to proclaim Massimo Kaufman as possibly the most important artist of his generation. Definitely the one to watch.

Watching and being watched is what Milan is all about. The Milanese circuit



Massimo Kaufman's *Allons Enfants!* (Private bags, plant pots and upholstered wall hanging.)

in among the works on display, but out in the corridor. Here emphatic hand gestures, scrunched tresses and Ruggieri dresses meet, not to discuss the art, but to catch up on the gossip since the last opening which, as a rule, took place the previous evening.

Sometimes this never-ending cycle gets out of hand, with as many as three absolutely essential parties taking place in one evening. For the serious art groupie the problem is how to shuffle his invitation

horse manure in front of the two of you and hope that you get an invite.

Social leaders in Milan will always book a table for twelve people before deciding on who will fill the places. This is done strictly at the last possible moment to cull the finest elements from among the congregated throng at the exhibition. The table – never circular – is deliberately laid out like the Last Supper. The host cuts a Christlike figure at the centre, and your status is defined by how close to him you are placed. This layout may inevitably lead to complications, but the socially adroit Milanese will think nothing of moving back and forth along the table to chat with a fellow guest and, so that his plate of gnocci should not grow cold during his bivouac, he simply picks it up and carries it with him.

This lack of ceremony is most appealing, particularly within the confines of the art gallery. At the *Arte povera* show at PAC, one intrigued spectator felt obliged not only to view Luciano Fabro's cube (some six feet high) from the outside, but chose to lift it up and check it out from within! Now, if you know your *Arte povera*, you will recognise that this indeed echoes Fabro's own performance "incubo" of 1967, but that is not the point. Meanwhile, on the other side of the gallery, three distinctly bloblike sculptures made out of caramel were being picked at by an inquisitive couple who were trying to establish whether or not toffee goes off after twenty years on display in an art gallery.

In fact this retrospective exhibition of *Arte povera*, which opened the day after the Saatchi Premio, did much to position the works in the Saatchi show within a historical context, providing perhaps the most direct of antecedents for the younger artists. *Arte povera*, or 'poor art' evolved from a group of like-minded individuals around 1967. They shared little but a desire to harness the energies of the found, and reinvent materials into works liberated from the hands of critics and museums. The diversity of these works, some twenty years old, broke the ground that allows the huge freedom of expression that may be found at the Saatchi Premio, the second wave of great Italian-based conceptualism. It is this same freedom which allows Scherzi the weight-lifting scottie dog to make his mark. ○



Chiyoko Miura's 'Dottia Inutile' (Useless Shower) and a 'Motociclista' by Umberto Cavenago.

changing and remaking that space. Visual puns such as the transparent image of a simple drinking-glass, the representation of which becomes doubly transparent in itself, are offset by more emotionally laden icons such as his piece in the show, *Madonnina*. Here a Madonna, like the one on the roof of the Milan Duomo, bears a halo of stars, and another, quite different, even contemporary, carries a halo that is the cupola of her own church. A tale of two cities, ambiguous loves and divided loyalties perhaps? Don't miss his first UK show at the Ikon Gallery in May.

Another prizewinner was also playing with tricks of representation. Gabriele Di Matteo presented a configuration of framed black boards, called *Cassa Contanti*.

of art openings resembles the club scene in Soho – same faces, different frocks. I arrived late for the opening of the Saatchi Premio. Milan's two airports are so regularly fogbound that there is a perpetual stream of disgruntled travellers racing their way along the autostrada from Turin to Milan in streams of coaches and rented Fiat 126s because their plane was diverted. I was one of the lucky ones who descended into town on autopilot on the third attempt. By the time I reached the gathering, however, most of the frocks were well into their third or fourth bellini cocktail. Squeezing oneself into the event was like mounting a Milan tram in the rush hour, but it soon became clear that the major concentration of people was not

cards. It is no longer just a question of being seen at the right place, but also at the right time. The people at the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (known to the cognoscenti as PAC) are cleverer than the rest. They always arrange for their shows to start as late as 9pm. It is at this point in the evening where those who stalk this particular circuit are beginning to assess the opportunities available to them for dinner, post-party. If the timing is absolutely precise, one may ascend meteorically through the ranks of the glitterati, by standing adjacent to the individual whom you wish to cultivate. At the appointed moment you slip out a pithy comment on the socio-political-paralinguistic significance of the pile of

print



Jonh Wilde on lysteria, blissing out and rock 'n' roll rampancy.

What sort of book *wouldn't* you be embarrassed to be holding on your deathbed? Now that's a thorny one. But picture the scene. Your Auntie Enid, the one who fancies herself as a bit of a trendy because she owns a Pickettywitch album, has given you a copy of Robert Elms' debut novel for Easter. You're halfway through it and you go down with lysteria because you also decided to tuck into that piece of cold chicken she left behind. Well, it just wouldn't do, would it? Shuffling off this mortal coil with Robert Elms open on your nightstand. The only thing more embarrassing would be to be found dead with your Auntie Enid lying next to you in the bed with only a bundle of sex toys separating you both.

So you have to be careful. After all, Ben Elton has written a novel. No reason why he should not have written a novel. After all, I'm the sort of altruist who believes everybody has a novel inside them. But it's one thing to stand on a stage in a horrible lurex jacket making jokes in a very loud voice about fast food and student union bars. It's another thing altogether to persuade people to moisten the seat of their armchairs in the privacy of their own homes, over the course of 450 pages. So I approached Ben Elton's *STARK* (Sphere, £3.50) with a fair amount of caution.

Three paragraphs in, it becomes obvious that Ben Elton is not Ernest Hemingway. But once you've recovered from that sudden shock, *Stark* suddenly becomes a ripsnorting read. No, really. Elton writes at the top of his voice. You just have to stretch your imagination and attempt to picture him standing next to you wearing one of those jackets, bawling into your lughole and flapping his arms. *Stark* might be described as an ecological tragicomedy. The earth is sick and dying. So, too, is the human race. We are systematically destroying the fabric of the planet and transforming it into a sterile wasteland. Some of us are more active in this destruction than others, namely the rich and powerful who are making pots of money out of fouling the seas with waste, contaminating the atmosphere with poisonous fumes, disrupting the climate and so on. Elton looks into the not-too-distant future, to the vanishing point where a crack appears that shatters the entire structure and everything comes tumbling down at once. Not that the rich and powerful pollution merchants are going to hang about when it happens. Which is where the *Stark* conspiracy comes in, an elaborate scheme devised by the richest men in the world to make sure they are not around when the shit hits the fan. Representing us – the ones who

will be around – are a handful of brain-fried Aussie hippies, an intrepid American journalist, a couple of aboriginals, a pommie poser with a large self-obsession problem and a Green freak called Rachel. Not much in the way of fair representation, you might think, but they're all we've got.

Considering the sizeable difficulties in getting a laugh out of the crises of life on earth, Elton manages rather well – although, understandably, the sniggerometer does ease back out of the red danger zone as the epidemic of extinction approaches. Elton's big problem is finishing the book without turning it into something reminiscent of *Les Patterson Saves The World*. He does, but only just. A damn fine debut nevertheless, even if it isn't printed on 100 percent recycled paper.

One book I wouldn't be embarrassed to leave open on my deathbed is Paul Micou's *THE MUSIC PROGRAMME* (Bantam Press, £11.95), whose sniggerometer is always hovering near the danger zone. Micou – introduced to BLITZ readers last month – offers us a one-way ticket to a remote African community where the members of the enigmatic *Music Programme* await a visit from an American congressman whose directive appears to be to strip the programme of its US funding. When he finally arrives, however, he is as confused as anybody else as to the actual purpose of it all. Further confusion is achieved when he is careless enough to fall in love with the wife of the programme's resident composer, who gets

his revenge by recording the sounds of their sweaty infidelity and weaving them into his maximalist magnum opus.

Micou's ingenious satire is as much a poke in the ribs of bureaucratic corporations as it is a smack in the chops to self-indulgent art sneak thieves. More than anything, however, he offers conclusive proof that human nature is as weird as smoked fish when you get down to it. The politics of bewilderment have rarely been expressed so eloquently. Micou's dazzling, hilarious debut is good news for those of us who have been waiting for someone to come along and show that humour and emotional chaos go together like wood splinters and fingers.

Harold Nicolson once remarked that one of the minor pleasures in life is to be slightly ill. But where do you draw the line? Pulled muscles? St Vitus' Dance? Cerebral thrombosis? Around the time that Tom Wolfe's *BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES* was published last year, I was coloured giraffe-yellow, laid up in bed with hepatitis. The weird thing about hepatitis is that it seems to yellow everything you come into contact with – by association, as it were. Once you've recovered and returned to the colour you were before, those things remain bright yellow and continue to remind you of the time you spent throwing up and losing five stone a day. For me, it's Thomas Pynchon, Desmond Lynam and my wife's kidney bean soup. Can't face them again. I can't even catch a glimpse of Desmond's shifty gaze without rushing to the bathroom. To come to the point: I realised then that, if I attempted to read *Bonfire Of The Vanities*, Tom Wolfe, too, would become irreparably yellow – tainted forever by my jaundice. Now, however, I am cured, and *Bonfire* is out in paperback (Picador, £4.99). I find that it is precisely the kind of masterpiece I imagined it would be. So there's your moral for the month.

Legend has it that Jim Morrison died with a copy of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* next

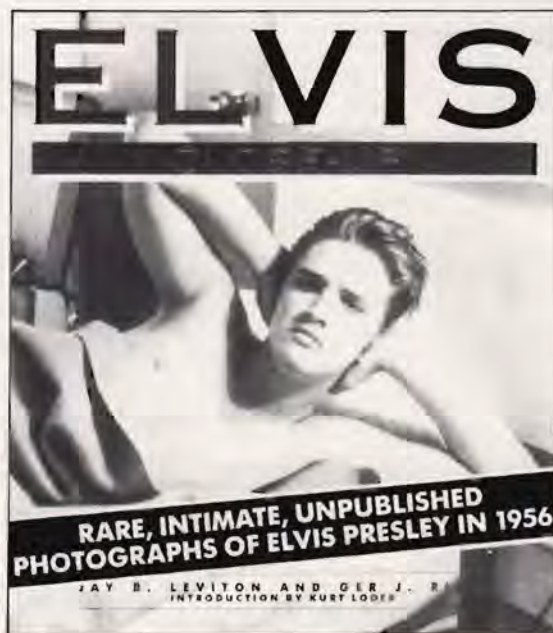
to his bath. Not embarrassing at all. Very Jim Morrison, in fact. If you are hungry to relive the life and times of rock's poet laureate, you could do a lot worse than take a sniff at Danny Sugerman's *WONDERLAND AVENUE: TALES OF GLAMOUR AND EXCESS* (Sidgwick & Jackson, £12.95). Sugerman is the wastrel previously responsible for *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, the famous Doors biography. This time, he takes a more subjective look at the road to ruin, detailing his life in the fast lane as a teenage Doors sycophant who turned into a teenage Doors manager who turned into a voracious drug abuser.

Billed as a mix of Hunter S Thompson and JD Salinger, *Wonderful Avenue* falls a little short of its promises. But as a DIY guide to falling in love with rock'n'roll and getting thoroughly blissing out and messed up in the process, I guess this does the job as good as any other. When it moves past Sugerman's mischievous childhood into the extraordinary excesses of late adolescence and beyond, it does its best to outdo *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas* for sheer demented nihilism, and almost gets there. But nobody does it like Thompson and Sugerman is no exception. Quibbles aside, this is literature as sublime narcosis, as screaming, throbbing rock'n'roll rampancy. Nosebleeds all the way, in fact.

While we're on the rock'n'roll racetrack, a fleeting mention for Jay B Leviton and Ger J Rijff's *ELVIS: CLOSE UP* (Century, £6.95), a collection of alarmingly sexy photographs of the regal one long before he turned into the Michelin Man. It's simply amazing how incredibly sensual a man can look when he's tucking into a bowl of oxtail soup with a cheese cracker poised for dunking. And remarkable how long he could keep up that shag-me-silly look.

Elvis Presley's shag-me-silly look is one of the very few of life's mysteries not (ahem) penetrated in Jonathan Meades' *PETER KNOWS WHAT DICK LIKES* (Paladin, £6.99), a collection of fictions, essays and reviews gathered from the pages of *The Sunday Times*, *Time Out*, *Literary Review*, *Designers' Journal* and others. One of our most consistently entertaining and provocative critics, Meades points out in his introduction that he is in the business of cocking his head. "You need only cock your head," he explains, "one degree from its norm to sniff the foetid richness and glimpse the hair beneath the clothes." So Meades promptly cocks his head in the general direction of a hundred modern horrors and wonders. Everything from Tom Wolfe's architectural ignorance to breakfast television, from Kurt Vonnegut to Ernest Hemingway, lager adverts to dog racing. Meades is one of those rare beasts who manges *not* to justify Kenneth Tynan's definition of a critic as a man who knows the way but can't drive the car.

Jolly good to see Fourth Estate making the works of John Waters available in this country. Hot on the heels of *Crackpot* comes *TRASH TRIO* (£8.95) – three wonderfully unhealthy screenplays, interspersed with photographs in case





you're having any trouble imagining the actual depths of depravity Waters is plumbing. The real corker here is *Flamingos Forever*, the screenplay that no producer would touch on the grounds that it was too disgusting. It contains such immortal stage directions as: "Turd magically slithers from toilet and rises in air. Wilbur and Vera are wide-eyed. Turd dive bombs and just misses them." Immortal dialogue like, "Wilbur, that turd was chasing us." Not all of it is so pretty.

Talking of pretty, the first three Penguin Originals have been prominently displayed on my coffee table for the last month. Visitors queuing up to tweak the cheeks

When RODNEY HALL talks about language, his eyes light up and his thoughts go pinballing. You've never seen anybody so excited.

"Oh, you know, we've been given the most precious inheritance," he drools. "You know how schoolteachers say, 'Why use a word like *commence* when you could use a good old-fashioned English word like *begin*?' It's just monstrous! They should be saying, 'Fantastic! The more elaborate the better!' The great thing about English is that it can absorb anything. It's omnivorous. Unlike French, it's not a language that refines what it takes in and wonders whether it can be tolerated. Like a liver transplant or something. English can take in anything. It's a most incredibly resilient language. But I'm very careful with it. In order to keep it alive, we've got to use it with the greatest care. By the very fact that it can absorb anything, it runs the danger of meaning nothing."

In his fifth and latest novel, *Kisses Of The Enemy* (Faber, £12.95), Rodney Hall has spent generously. Six hundred and twenty pages, each word carved out with the greatest caution. Angela Carter has remarked that Hall displays the English language as if he had freshly washed it. That every sentence contains a small charge of surprise.

Set in the near future, *Kisses Of The Enemy* is the tragedy of the fall of a great figure, Australian President Bernard Buchanan, who leads a new republic and has to learn how to be a human being the hard way. Like most of Hall's novels, it ends with a character being forced into accepting humility. Hall points out that this humility is at the heart of the grotesque, a recurring theme in his fiction.

"I just love that idea," he says. "As an idea, the grotesque, the out of the ordinary, is the single most interesting thing that an artform can explore. The grotesque is to do with embracing everything. If we confront the fact that we don't conform to some squeezed-out concept of good taste, but can generously accept everything, bunions and all, that's a warm, encompassing

of my newborn son, Bill, would stop to enquire what those fancy looking novels are actually like. Oh, I haven't thought of actually *reading* them, I would explain casually. I just thought they'd look great next to my blow-up alligator. Much commotion has greeted the Penguin launch, most of it centred on the marketing style rather than the literary quality. I recall the thundering silence that greeted the launch of the vaguely similar *Serpent's Tail* titles eighteen months ago. On that occasion, literary excellence seemed to tally with the stylishness of their book flaps. This time, I'm not so sure.

Of the first three titles, Tim Cahill's *JAGUARS RIPPED MY FLESH* (£4.99) is by far the strongest — a splendidly varied array of travel adventure stories. "Savage blood-crazed razor-toothed jaguars have been ripping at my flesh without surcease for ten years now," chuckles the narrator as he takes us to strange and mysterious corners of the globe where strangeness and mystery lurk in abundance. Generally, the chapter signposts — 'The Underwater

Zombie', 'No Laughs In Satan's Silt Hole', 'A Camp At The End Of Time' — are a fair indication of what to expect within. Cahill is the kind of guy who knows how much irony is needed when faced with a charging grizzly bear. He also knows how to rub two ideas together to start a fire. A ripe talent.

On the other hand, neither Philip Ridley's *IN THE EYES OF MR FURY* nor Patrick McGrath's *BLOOD AND WATER* (both £4.99) are the stuff that make for an unforgettable launch. Ridley's economical prose leaves plenty of pauses between breaths but is ultimately too flattened out to lift this humdrum tale of magical, historical forces from the realms of the very ordinary. McGrath's dark, dank collection of Gothic horror stories has its moments but really there's nothing here that even remotely threatened to put the willies up me. A less than sensational start of the Originals, but I'm hanging in there. They might not make it to my deathbed but there's still acres of room on the coffee table.

Finally, this month, aiming to go out on an up note, three warmly

recommended novels. Simon Burt's *THE SUMMER OF THE WHITE PEACOCK* (Faber, £9.99) is an elegant short novel written with a wry humour and tells of Peter-Patrick Moberley, out-of-work actor, who fancies himself as the reincarnation of James Dean. As gracefully as possible in the circumstances, Burt describes a summer in the life of precious, pretentious, passionate Peter-Patrick as he falls in love with the dimwitted Bella, only to settle for rodgering her husband Jack on the living-room carpet every afternoon. In case you're wondering where the peacock figures in this bizarre love triangle, he's there to represent the hope that greets the summer and the hopelessness that bids it farewell. Unblushingly good.

Kristin McCloy's *VELOCITY* (Centry Hutchinson, £11.95) is a gently erotic tale of grief, lost innocence and carnal obsession in smalltown Carolina. Ellie arrives from New York following the death of her mother and attempts to piece together the fragments of her past while coming to terms with the family tragedy and the unresolved tensions that pursue her through the surrounding blankness. This is her struggle to put together a new life in exactly the mould of her old life, until she finally returns to the relative calm of New York. McCloy's silences are deafening. Her prose seems to hover rather than rove, and her sensitive elegance recalls Ann Beattie at her finest. Clearly a major talent in the making.

Richard Russo's *THE RISK POOL* (Chatto, £12.95) returns to the mythical New York town of Mohawk that provided the title and setting of his debut novel two years ago. This time around, Russo follows a thirty-year journey in the lives of drifting ne'er-do-well Sam Hall and his introspective son; their unsteady relationship, their low-expectation happiness, their marginal losses and gains. Here, Russo is demonstrating a greater openness in his writing. There is a generosity and emotional breadth to *The Risk Pool* that was lacking in his previous novel, surely establishing him as one of the most promising young craftsmen to emerge from America over the last few years. An irresistible storyteller set to give Richard Ford and Tobias Wolff a run for their money.



STEVE SPELLER

sort of thing."

Born in Solihull in 1935, Hall moved to Australia with his family at the age of 13 and has lived there ever since, except for a three-year period spent walking through Europe, during which time he wrote his first novel, *The Ship On The Coin*. Though he has been writing since his early teens he has also been a delivery boy, office boy, general shitticker, actor, painter, professional clarinetist and teacher of Early Music.

"I went to Australia as an outsider. I have a definite distance on Australia, but then I have a distance on everything. I do see myself as an Australian. That's unquestionably where I'm at home. But I know that I have to always work at fitting in to a certain degree. I'm still, in a marginal sense, an outsider there. I was put through some monstrously brutal things at school because I was that way. I made it worse by digging my heels in. It was a kind of power. I hated having it but I didn't want to let go of it. I think, in some sense, writers have to be outsiders.

"Has writing been a battle?" he wonders. "It's all a battle. A desperate battle. In places like Queensland and Brisbane? My God! If you were sitting in a pub, the last thing you'd say if someone asked you what you did for a living would be to admit to being a writer or a poet! You'd probably get yourself beaten to a pulp!" ● JONH WILDE

music



**Andy Darling on
andorphine secretions,
aesthetic construction
and authenticity.**

An extremely bad record has been released this month. The worst. 'I Eat Cannibals' by Toto Cuelo was better – way better. *Jet Vegas* (MCA) by JET VEGAS is a shaved dog of a record, an exercise in sub-cynicism, a sign of what purport to be the signs of the times. It rattles along in Brother Beyond/Bros primary colours, pleading with us to accompany it by doing the wedding reception running-on-the-spot (quite!) dance as performed by the grotesquely happy Yazz. And the words go, "L-O-N-D-O-N! Where walking the streets can lead to fame!" This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but with a whimpering horde of show-offs who are



Jet Vegas

depressed because *Night Network* has been scrapped and all they ever wanted to do was present it. The final song, 'That's What Life Is', begins by sneering at the Sixties and Seventies. Yowza, we think, they're going to kick down the statues and herald the New Age, the millennium.

But Jet Vegas offer nothing. Not 'nothing' in the sense of negation, nihilism or the silence that follows a burst of machine-gun fire, just nothing as in 'That's what life is! Drive a car fast and play the music loud!' One's pique is increased because you sense that these

people reckon they're onto something in the way that The Pet Shop Boys are onto something. After all, they both sing about West End girls/opportunities/making money, etc. Whereas that's precisely the point at which the tension – and thus the art – begins for Neil Tennant and the other lad, for Jet Vegas it's the end of the piggin' rainbow. Some of the vocal nuances are reminiscent of early Heaven 17 – another combo who, like The Pet Shop Boys, tapped the dialectics of pop music; the ultra personal and the ultra social. So all in all we might conclude that Jet Vegas well and truly give me the pip. Good name, mind.

THE SHAMEN is a good name for a music group, and *In Gorbachev We Trust* (Demon) is a fine title for an elpee record. I expected little, given that I spent a large part of 1987 and '88 at dreadful concerts that always seemed to feature The Shamen fourth on the bill. Student concerts they were, at polytechnics on the outskirts of London. I always found myself too busy contemplating lobbying for a revocation of the gun laws to concentrate on the stage activity. And so, what a pleasant surprise their album turned out to be. The first track is called 'Synergy', which deploys that very device – the process whereby two or more substances act upon each other and produce an effect that neither alone could accomplish – throughout.

The album is the point at which acid house, psychedelic pop and agitprop meet, and none are ever simply themselves again. 'Political pop' is so often the last refuge for the unimaginative, the person who can rhyme 'Falklands War' with 'Thatcher is a whore', and who regards the music as a mere accompaniment rather than an arrangement of sounds underpinned by an ideology. The Shamen sample American bible-bashers, and they burrow deep into the left sides of our brains at the same time, eager to trigger off



The Shamen

andorphine secretions rather than simply presenting us with a xeroxed image of that-which-is-wrong. Pleasure and Politics. Whew.

What do we demand of a band called BLISS? Wheelbarrowfuls of *jouissance*, that beyond-pleasure sensation of undoing, of lightheadedness prescribed by Roland Barthes and translated as bliss? What we get on *Love Prayer* (EMI) initially appears to be nothing more than generic bliss, aka 'soul', with all its signifiers of 'authenticity' such as references to hearts and soul, brothers and sisters, interspersed with what sound suspiciously like instruments that might have been purchased in the blind gentleman's shop in *The Blues Brothers*. And yet the record is a veritable corker, turning our preconceptions just like that flamboyant Seventies footballer Rodney Marsh could turn on a sixpence.

It's the singer's voice, man. Rachel Morrisson, like Anita Baker and Morrissey, goes beyond the instrumentation, to make new shapes that remind us that the root of the word



Bliss

'inspiration' is in the latin *inspire*, to draw in breath. When I feel like showing off, I tend to crouch down in the middle of a crowded pavement, exhale deeply and then leap into the air, inhaling as I do so. The few seconds of euphoria certainly outweigh the concomitant fainting, the head cracking on the pavement and the rozzers carting me off to the cells. And come to think of it, that euphoric state corresponds to Barthes' *jouissance*, so Bliss aren't so wide of the mark after all. Marvellous. They'll go far, and I just hope they don't hash it all up by hiring virtuoso soul session musicians.

LOYD COLE & THE COMMOTIONS (Polydor) is a 'best so far' collection, which is an interesting concept, given that the man's career so far has been founded on the inability to start, let alone get anywhere. I'm not knocking him, mind. In his finest moments – 'Perfect Skin', 'Forest Fire', 'Are You Ready To Be Heartbroken?', 'Rattlesnakes', 'Brand New Friend', 'Lost Weekend', there have been a fair few – he's forged a beauty from his inactivity, from the plight of the poet/singer/songwriter in the Eighties. 'Lost Weekend' is an admission of this, as he laments a sojourn in a hotel in Amsterdam which he expected to render him some writerly inspiration. So too,

'Rattlesnakes': 'She looks like Eva Marie Saint, in *On The Waterfront*, she reads Simone De Beauvoir in her American circumstance', desperately trying to construct an aesthetic.

It's dumb to dismiss Cole as archaic or pretentious. He may well be both, but there's a big, big frisson to be had from his incompleteness, his desire to be both Bob Dylan and Lou Reed, his awareness that there are simply too many books to be read and not enough life to be lived. Cole is a victim – as we all are – of this Post-Modern age where, because of the media's ubiquity, everything seems literally within reach. But of course it isn't. Too much to do, too little time, what to do? An excellent album from a man who would never have wanted to present *Night Network*, even if they'd given him a sten-gun and a clear shot at Jet Vegas.

Back to authenticity with URBAN JAZZ (Polydor), a collection of mainly instrumentals from people like Jimmy Smith; The New Jersey Kings and The James Brown Band. Just as I don't understand *The Goon Show*, so I've never



Cowboy Junkies

really sussed out jazz. Too much attitude has to be taken to it; that advert for lager, shot in grainy – and thus authentic – black and white, in which bridges are crossed because of a saxophone, seems more than a little questionable to me. The male bonding, the reverence, the irreducible realness of the jazz form is just so much more myth-making at work. Reaching for the 'authentic' in 'inauthentic' times is tempting, but it's as unimaginative as the Jet Vegas approach.

Blimey, more rehashes. *The Trinity Session* by COWBOY JUNKIES (Cooking Vinyl) includes arrangements of tunes by Hank Williams, Rogers & Hart, Lou Reed and Trad Anonymous, all done in a pared down country & western style. It's a miracle that it works, given that C & W is, along with stand-up comedy, one of the easiest artforms to botch up. Not everyone has it in them to be Faron Young. *The Trinity Sessions* works magnificently because in minimising everything, the sense of danger lurking behind all those cryin' into mahi beer songs comes to the fore. I had to turn the volume knob on my Dansette to 'dangerous' before I could hear anything – although I had just done the fainting trick at Oxford Circus. It's as though they're singing and playing



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▷ quietly as part of a late-night ritual before huntin' down whoever it was that caused them to cry into their beer in the first hogtied place. There's some light as well as shade, of course — notably in their cover of 'Sweet Jane', which keeps in the undemonstrative lane and hints that Jane maybe wasn't so sweet after all.

Let's hear it for **BAND OF SUSANS**. *Love Agenda* (Blast First) is loud as billy-o, coming as it does out of the great American tradition of loud guitars being throttled by young people as though there were little or no chance of there being a tomorrow. Like Sonic Youth, however, we're talking about something rather greater than just a cranked-up-amplifiers-are-good tenet. *Love Agenda* turns the ugliest of HM riffs into something assimilable, something more than just oppositional rock for young men to taunt their parents with. We're not talking emasculation here — what is there to emasculate in a young man taunting his parents anyway? Nothing is watered down, rather elements are moved around (this sometimes means you can't quite make out what the words are) and our position as listener shifts to the eye of the storm — surrounded by the swirl, slap bang in the middle of the bugger, yet simultaneously calm.

Each generation believes it invented sex and can destroy the power of the electric guitar. I actually have the dockets to prove that I was there when oral sex was devised, but I'd be kidding myself if I suggested that the final sounds were anywhere near wrung out of the 'leaky guitar. Listen to *Love Agenda* and you'll believe me, about the guitar at any rate.

And so to the UK's most underrated band, **DEPECHE MODE**. Oh, how we would raise our voices during arguments about the correct pronunciation of the name! *101* (Mute) is a live double affair, the soundtrack of the movie of the same name, and it takes in everything from 'Just Can't Get Enough' to 'Behind The Wheel' by way of 'Master & Servant', 'Blasphemous Rumours', the lot. Like New Order, Depeche Mode exist apart from the vicissitudes of the music business, and their records reflect this. Nobody sounds like them. Nobody sounded like Tessie O'Shea either, but that's hardly the point.

Boyd Rice, correspondent of Charles

Manson and experimenter with sound-noise, said as much on the letters page of *BLITZ* just a few months ago. They may have some pig's ear lyrics — "People are people so why should it be that you and I should get along so awfully" *zum beispiel* — but that's by-the-by, or rather it shouldn't be isolated. Something happens when they combine avant-garde euro noise, the structures of pop, the soulful voice, the fetishising of the factory. It's a synergistic process, and one they surely never dreamt of in those heady early days when they were dolled up to the nines in brocade weskits and breeches. Their movie is in black and white, although I can't yet compare it with the lager-saxophone advert, having missed the premiere due to fainting in the street and being kept in overnight 'for observation'. ○

RICHARD DEAN



Moscow musicians Peter Mamonov and Shasha Lipnitsky have just caused a stir in their publicist's building by walking unannounced into someone else's office and commandeering the billiard table. Now they're eating pizza. "Please, first let's enjoy this", says Lipnitsky, glowering from behind a full Dostoevskian beard.

They're in London to publicise a forthcoming tour by their band **ZVUKI MU**, and an eponymous LP — to be released this month — produced by Brian Eno. It's anyone's guess how British audiences will take to a band who move like Jethro Tull, sound something like early Talking Heads or Stump, and count the Butthole Surfers and Big Black among their influences.

Lipnitsky is a sometime journalist and former icon dealer with a taste for restoring churches. His autobiographical notes contain alarming details about his grandmother, a film actress imprisoned for having an affair with a foreigner; about his brother, who died from drinking chemicals for icon restoration; and about his first wife: "a very beautiful actress, but she was an idler and drank too much wine".

Singer Peter Mamonov is the focal point of Zvuki Mu's stage show, treating audiences to frenzied displays of rubber-mouthing and storklike leg contortions. Mamonov, who resembles an anaemic, mildly disturbed shipping clerk, was described by Soviet rock critic Artemy Troitsky as "a witty drunkard, wild dancer and failed poet". When I mention this, he looks indignant.

"Where's my drink?" he says, defying me to search the table. In the band's early days, his lyrics were largely concerned with alcohol-fogged lowlife, reflecting a long-standing problem of Soviet society.

"People weren't just drinking, they were trying to bury their pain. But it's funny that all my songs about drink were written when I didn't even want to touch a drop. That's not important — the main reason I started to write songs is because I was a sportsman" — a gnomic remark he declines to expand on.

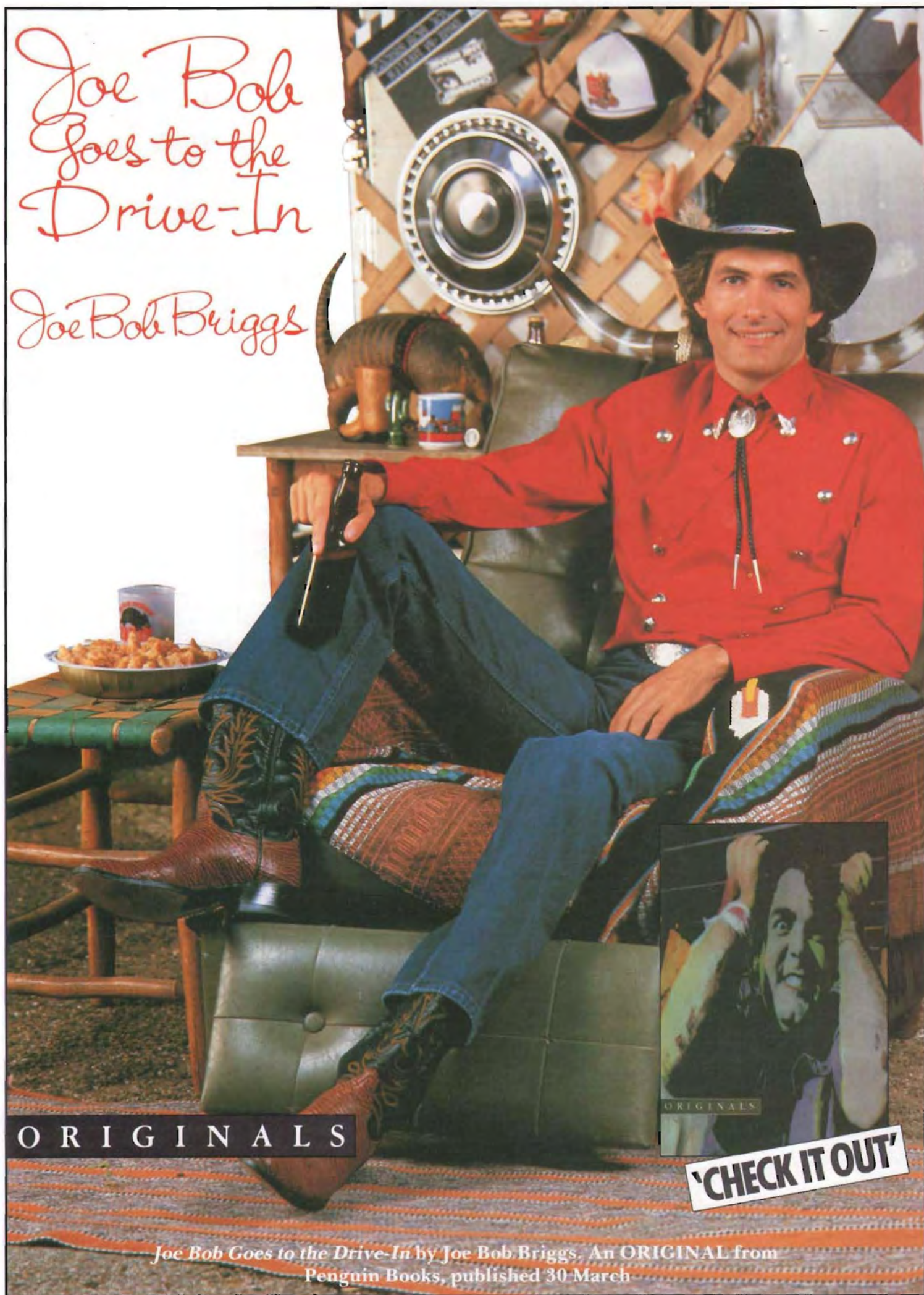
Zvuki Mu — a punning play on *The Sound Of Music* and 'moo' as in 'moocow' — formed in the early Eighties but, like many other Russian bands, suffered setbacks when rock was driven underground during the Chernenko period. Now that *perestroika* has brought Soviet rock more into the open than ever before, they've become a leading fixture on the established scene, but they see the current climate as a mixed blessing for musicians. "A lot of people feel more comfortable when they're dealing with a brick wall," says Lipnitsky. "Before, rock musicians were fighting with enemies which were visible. Now you have to fight with yourself."

The collaboration with Eno came about when the domed dilettante was recruiting bands for a London-Leningrad TV link-up. When Zvuki Mu repaid his visit, they were shocked to find that he wasn't more widely known, something that Lipnitsky sees as illustrating a major sociological difference. "We were in Woodbridge, where Eno lives — I lost my way, and I asked about a thousand people where his house was. No one knew his name. In Russia, if someone like that lived in a town, even the dogs would be able to tell you where he lived." ● JONATHAN ROMNEY



Joe Bob Goes to the Drive-In

Joe Bob Briggs



ORIGINALS



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SPEND, SPEND, SPEND

From A La Mode to Zone, BLITZ presents a selection of some of the capital's finest or foremost fashion and furniture shops.

Compiled by Kim Bowen.

Reports: Kim Bowen, Tom Eliot, Simon Tesler, Bonnie Vaughan.

Also in this magazine you'll find a guide to the best eating and drinking places, and a selection of the most intriguing galleries.

A LA MODE 36 Hans Crescent, SW3. Home to one of London's most tasteful and adventurous buyers, here is where mouthwatering and unnervingly expensive international designerwear is found. The opulent creations of Giorgio D'Saint Angelo can be found here, along with Designer of the Year Rifat Ozbek, Spanish genius Sybilla, Antony Price, Gaultier, extraordinary jewellery, and exotic hand-beaded shoes and bags.

ACADEMY SOHO 45 Newburgh St, W1. An inexpensive emporium boasting a clutch of young English designers. Two levels feature a selection of new designers chosen by shop 'co-ordinator' Baldev Thethy, who's been doing this kind of thing since 1984, originally in the Kings Road. You'll also find quite demented jewellery and unusual designer shoes.

AGNES B 111 Fulham Rd, SW3. A sort of Fench Paul Smith which caters for both men (downstairs) and women (upstairs). The only problem with the London branch of Agnes B is that it still doesn't stock the fantastic, sombre-coloured baby clothes you can get everywhere else in the world. It does, however, have the eternally popular design classics for which it is famous, although the New York and Paris branches are better stocked. These clothes improve with age.

ALLY CAPPELLINO 95 Wardour St, W1. An airy and spacious store in Soho with lots of windows, warm pale wooden floors, flowers and an altogether fresh feel. Cappellino's entire range of simple, modern classic clothing is available, nestling quite happily amongst the strip clubs. Fashionable creatures drift in and out in a daze, seeing not flesh but frocks.

AMERICAN RETRO 35 Old Compton St, W1. Depending on your sensibilities, this designer box is either a dream or a nightmare. Home of the Zippo, the perfect portfolio and doubtless the matt black corn remover, it is both ultimately trivial and deeply satisfying. A wonderful selection of unusual photographic books and a large postcard section.

ANTONY PRICE 34 Brook Street, W1. The ultimate glamour store, containing viciously waisted frocks and cocktail suits for aspiring starlets. Men seem to automatically develop square granite jaws when they're stuffed into the fearfully masculine suits. Filthily expensive; adored by rock stars and fashion queens alike.

ARTEMIDE 17-19 Neal St, WC2. Strange and wonderful lighting for quirky and not so quirky tastes. Also an interesting selection of contemporary and modern mirrors.

BAZAAR 1 & 4 South Molton St, W1. Without question, the finest menswear shop in London, with a range from the discreetly bourgeois charm of Giuliana Fujiwara to the demented glamour of Gaultier's most spirited creations. The knowledgeable and charming staff are unlikely to let anyone walk out dressed like a complete fool. The most seriously wealthy shoppers are found here – rock stars and computer geniuses rub shoulders as they rifle the sumptuous rails fulfilling their base fashion needs.

BEAU MONDE 43 Lexington St, W1. No longer the baby it once was, Sylvia Young's Beau Monde was first to bring fashion into the Silver Place/Lexington Street district of Soho. Beau Monde is rightly proud of the high-quality work of relative newcomers Tim Lander-Boyce, Kerry Bull and Linda Zucco.

BLAZER 90 New Bond St, W1. Now part of Conran's Storehouse group and expanding rapidly with branches all over London. Smart, nicely

understated, classic English menswear.

BOND 10 Newburgh St, W1. In the street with a future, designer wide boys Kevin Reid and Adrian Garrett present 'the working person' with basic modern classics – John Smedley, Wendy Dagworthy and Hanes. Victims beware.

BOYD & STOREY 12 Newburgh St, W1. The amalgamated talents of Boyd and Storey are displayed in this charming and reasonably priced boutique. Designed by the group D'Soto, the shop offers some of the sexiest fringed frockettes it's possible to buy.

BRATS 281 Kings Rd, SW3 and 624 Fulham Rd, SW6. Where stepping out for a £5 gift turns into a £600 shopping spree. Don't struggle – spend. Engraved silver-plated condom-cases (around £34), metallic mauve kettles, and the Seven-Star System – a palm-sized personal organiser. What you buy is what you are. Home also to Dr Bonner's cultishly sought-after hippy American peppermint soap.

BRINKS & TUCK 16 Monmouth Street, WC2. A refreshingly sparse interior by Tom Dixon with striking, huge mirrors and a very friendly atmosphere. Jonathan Brinks and Anne Marie Tuck head a young, personable staff who are guaranteed not to turn all dictatorial when you request merely a trim. Expect a good variety of music – Motown to Sinatra to club hits – which is a welcome plus for those longer visitors. Cuts start at £16 for men; £18 for women.

BROWNS 23-27 South Molton St, W1 (also Sloane St, SW1). London's largest, most luxurious designer department store. This palace stocks Gaultier, Alaïa, Gigli, Kamali, Moschino, Donna Karan, Ozbeck, Montana and Mugler, Patrick Kelly, Lacroix, Dolce and Gabbana... the list goes on and on. In addition to all this sumptuous temptation, Browns also has the 'Labels For Less' store, which stocks last season's little numbers, alongside the occasional on-season item which has been overbought. An unnerving experience for the uninitiated but ultimately utterly rewarding.

BURNS George St, W1. For the most earnest fashion consumer of all, here is the place to buy your Christian Lacroix – shockingly expensive, but unbelievably rewarding at sale time, when some things are reduced by as much as 40 percent.



GINO SPINO

CARTIER 175 New Bond St, W1. For top of the range designer objects. Pens start at £65, lighters at £160. As far as prices are concerned, the sky's the limit, depending upon how many diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, rubies and so forth which you may require to festoon your designer Zippo. Also available are various priceless pieces of jewellery.

CHANEL 31 Sloane St, SW1. The last great bastion of bourgeois fashion consumerism. Classic suits with little gold weights in the hems (so they hang right), tiny handbags that cost the earth, more reasonably priced make-up, and the odd fab T-shirt for around £40. Mesmerising jewellery, that any self-respecting B-girl would kill for. For the uninitiated, Chanel shopping can be intimidating but, as your mother used to say, "Remember, they're only shop assistants."

CHEVIGNON 1 Charlotte St, W1. Brand new addition to Fitzrovia's burgeoning fashion district. Classic menswear – stylish, durable and sexy. Levi-style leather jackets, own brand jeans, great motif T-shirts.

CHIMES OF BIG BEN 66 Great Queen St, WC2. An intriguing shop featuring the best of design in bicycles, matador jackets, condoms, classic Tom Binns jewellery, the odd antique fitting and exquisite shoes. A delectable treasure hunt for the fashion and design connoisseur. Also look at **ROBE NOIRE** next door.



CHRISTOPHER NEW 52 Dean St, W1. Weirdly charming little shop, worth visiting if only for a gander at the table with twisted brick legs, the post-modern cubicles and a cabinet by Clive Briggs that beggars description. Specialities are the highly distinctive shirts, fantastical ties and pins. All very well-made and wearable – but not the place for stark minimalists. The service is also weirdly charming. The nervous-looking one is Christopher.

COMME DES GARÇONS 59 Brook St, W1. The London home of Rei Kawakubo, Japan's foremost design genius. It boasts the same stark Comme des Garçons interior which can be found in every major fashion city in the world. The clothes are equally forbidding in the most austere elegant manner. Dreadfully expensive, but if you have the money, these designs are everlasting.

CONRAN SHOP 81 Fulham Rd, SW3. Definitely London's most fabulous department store, far more upmarket (and expensive) than baby sister Habitat and more exclusive than elder brother Heal's. Situated in the old Michelin building, this is the place to go if you've got money to burn and a home to fill. The message here is design as a way of life. Presented gallery-style behind the huge ground-floor windows, antique sofas rub shoulders with wrought-iron dining tables; Aalto chairs nestle around symbolist centrepieces. Downstairs features lighting, crockery, cutlery, food, wine, bathroom necessities, children's toys and designer gimmicks in glass cases.

CUTLER & GROSS 16 Knightsbridge Green, SW1. Opticians to the stars, and all those who need designer eyewear, catering strictly to the spectacle wearer. None of your contact lens nonsense around here, thank you. Presided over by man-about-town Tony Gross, Elton John, Janet Street-Porter, Boy George and other celebrated myopics get in focus here.

DANLANN DE BAIREAD 72 Crowndale Rd, NW1. The site for Slim Barrett's sculpture and jewellery. Also leather-bound books, traditional English hallmarked silver and one-off clothing for men and women by Marco Erhl. Modern Art by 'underground' artists available too.

DEMOP Upper James Street, W1. Landmarked by a bizarre metallic sculpture outside, this ultratrendy salon still has a constant flow of

fashion victims long after the untimely demise of its sister clothes shop, Demob. Don't be daunted by the wildly intimidating post-apocalyptic interior, the Demop staff are amiable and highly accomplished in hair designs both weird and wonderful.

THE DUFFER OF ST GEORGE 27 D'Arblay St, W1. Sexy wideboy suits and waistcoats, well-made and humorous, for well-intentioned geezers to go out and score in. Run by the same sexy wideboys, who seem to enjoy their work immensely, especially when it involves teasing female shoppers.

EMPORIO ARMANI Old Brompton Road, SW3. New home for all the younger glamour range, set within a splendid location just down the road from Harrods. Also, a coffee shop staffed by part-time models who at time of going to press hadn't quite worked out how to balance coffee cups properly. We have great hopes for the future, however.

EYETECH Broadwick Street W1. Simply the most fashionable stockist of designer eyewear that London has to offer, presided over by the elegant Adam Simmonds. Features horribly expensive but beautiful spectacles and sunglasses by Gaultier, LA Eyeworks, Alain Mikli and more. Most importantly, good aesthetic advice is given to those who need it.

FFWD 14a Newburgh St, W1 (also at 261 Kings Rd, SW3). Like Oggetti, a shop for those who collect all things black and chrome. The Kings Road branch specialises in more colourful objects, as well as ceramics and jewellery, much of it specially commissioned. Watches, lighters and hip flasks are strong points, as is the very special Atomic coffeemaker.

FEATHERS 40 Hans Crescent, SW1. A delectable grown-up fashion den, containing tempting rails dripping with Montana, Moschino, Mugler and Patrick Kelly. Bargain City at sale time.

FISH 30 D'Arblay Street, W1. This small, friendly hairdressing salon in the heart of Soho is distinctive not only for its cheery service, but for its striking decor – thanks to owner Paul Burfoot's loving restoration of the site's original Fifties tile, left over from its incarnation as a fishmonger's. Prices are exceedingly reasonable – haircuts start at £17 for women and £12 for men, coffee or herbal tea is always on offer, and Fish produce their own range of quality hair products. Boasts a typically extreme Soho clientele, which ranges from film stars to prostitutes.

FLEX 97-99 Dean St, W1. Daring menswear for the fashionable young man – leopardskin waistcoats and heavy leather jackets, and near-white Levi's that can be bleached to perfection.

GALLERY OF ANTIQUE COSTUMES & TEXTILES 2 Church St, NW8. The proprietors have invested time and effort in amassing a collection unique outside a museum. Admirably, they hate the idea of intimidation and instead promote rummaging. Here you can find boned waistcoats for men and curtains torn from the windows of French



Fish's exterior

GIND SPERO

chateaux. *Dangerous Liaisons* devotees can prance down here immediately and kit out in rakish hose and court jackets, at the same time getting an 18th-century £30,000 beaded duvet cover to complete the look.

GALLERY 28 28 Brook St, W1. Home to the complete Moschino range, as well as Galliano, Mugler, Nikos and a plethora of other designers. Some fairly feverish mohair sweaters and loud jewellery.

GREAT FROG 10 Canton St, W1. A shop which executes an elaborate pun on the phrase 'heavy metal'. Bulky fantasy jewellery for the long of hair and strong of neck.

HAT SHOP 9 Gees Ct, St Christophers Place, W1 (also Neal St, WC2). A lush range of hats from the cheapest beret to the most extraordinarily pricey designer confection.

HEAL'S 196 Tottenham Court Rd, W1. Conran's stylish and upmarket furniture department store, somewhat eclipsed by the Michelin Building's Conran Shop. Nevertheless, this is the place to buy your handmade mattress, your designer cutlery or your glass coffee table. Spacious and airy, it's a lovely place to shop or just to browse.

HERMES 155 New Bond St, W1. Big flash scarves, wildly bizarre quilted T-shirts and anoraks, plush luggage, and the occasional in-house PR stunt. A recent one involved teaching shoppers how to tie their scarves like Princess Anne.

HOME 14 Ingestre Place, W1. Loud ceramics mix it with confident women's wear from Stephen Ward and Guerilla Farm.

HYPER HYPER 26-40 Kensington High St, W8. A huge building where you can buy anything from sticky rubber dresses to couture beaded evening gowns, and it's the only place to find the complete Ghost range. If you can face crowds for a bargain, then it's worth checking out.

JANET FITCH 2 Percy St, W1. An exquisite shop which stocks unusual ceramics and fantastic matt black gadgetry as well as delectable clothes. Latest catch is the new Andrew Logan collection of jewellery and sculptures.

JASPER CONRAN 37 Beauchamp Place, SW3. A tempting little salon, for the complete designer experience, stocking the whole luxurious range. A new shop is opening opposite Hamnett in Brompton Road, SW3.

JOHNNY MOKE 396 Kings Rd, SW10. Superb handmade shoes. The bespectacled proprietor peers down his nose at you curiously while the caged birds in the rear of the shop twitter away, and you are mesmerised into parting with lots of money very rapidly.

JOHNSONS Kings Rd, SW10. Almost the original rock'n'roll outfitters. Great leather jackets – some of them highly glamorous in gold – plus constantly updated shoe designs and more. Prices are easy on the pocket.

JONES 13 Floral St, WC2 (also 71 & 129 Kings Rd). Young, wild and seriously fashionable drag for men and women. Broad range of elegant designs including the filthily expensive normal Gaultier and the much cheaper Junior range. Also Aquagirl, Sybilla, Anne Demeulemeester, Patricia Field, Galliano and Flett. Chevignon and Armani are available across the road in a new triple-floored menswear store. Prices big and small. Impress your friends – wipe out your bank balance in one short afternoon.

JOSEPH 77 Fulham Rd, SW6. On the former Conran site, the new Joseph superstore is completely different in style from the rest of the chain – no matt black, but marble floors and

white pillars. Tina Chow crystal jewellery, McAfee shoes and the usual Joseph range.

JOSEPH POUR LA MAISON 16 Sloane St, SW1. Could be overbearing to those fashion shoppers not coated in emotional steel. Beautiful clothes for the exceptionally thin are the speciality. Here you'll find Azzedine Alaïa, Rifat Ozbek, Jasper Conran, Stephen Jones hats and many charming and unusual objects of the matt black variety. (Also: **JOSEPH TRICOT**, **JOSEPH BIS**, **JOSEPH POUR LA VILLE** all over town.)

JUNIOR GAULTIER 28 Fouberts Place, W1. A London home for Jean Paul's more accessibly priced range. Due to open in April.

JUST GAMES 71 Brewer Street, W1. The first and still the only specialist Games Shop in London, and therefore to be treasured. There's a wide range of traditional games and board games, but specialities are the handmade wooden chessboards and backgammon sets. They can also sell you Monopoly in a dozen different languages. What they don't have they'll order, so ask to be put on the mailing list.

KATHARINE HAMNETT 20 Sloane Street, SW1 (also Brompton Rd and Kings Rd SW3 and South Molton St, W1). The newest Hamnett store. An aquarium for a window, twisted and bent furniture made of tortured baroque steel within, along with red velvet drapes and exceptionally good-looking staff. The full Hamnett range is to be found here.

MALCOLM LEVENE 13-15 Chiltern St, W1. The only place in London where the excellent American Kiehls beauty and grooming products can be bought. All quite expensive but 100 percent natural. They're mainly aimed at men, but still



Hamnett's surrealist interior.

marvellous for women. This bright, fresh store also stocks a range of fashionable, casual menswear.

MANOLO BLAHNIK 49 Old Church St, SW3. Possibly the most wonderful shoe shop in the entire world. It stocks ravishingly beautiful footwear designed by the elegant proprietor, and is presided over by his equally elegant sister, Evangeline. Some of the world's most famous fashion feet traipse in here for shoes and boots priced at approximately £250 a pair – the kind that you can't wear in the rain, only in your limo.

METROPOLIS 3 D'Arblay St, W1. Elegantly balanced between class and kitsch, this small, cramped but lovable shop seeks out the curious and the charming from the period 1920–1970 and commissions one-offs from modern designers.

NO? YES! 38 Floral Street, WC2. Colourful, stylish women's wear by Susan Jenkyn Jones. Affordable prices and a relaxed, no-pressure environment.

NIKOS 122 Kings Road, SW3. Originally famed as the designer of the world's most erotic and body-conscious underwear, Nikos has turned to designing for other parts of the body as well. Expensive and frivolous fabness is readily available in this beautifully designed shop.

OGGETTI 133 Fulham Rd, SW3 (Also Jermyn Street, W1 and New Bond St, W1). The original designer object shop. The Oggetti style (matt black and chrome gadgets presented under glass) has been ripped off by everyone from Conran to Next, but Oggetti are still hanging on in there. The best place to go for black and chrome scissors, renaissance motif ashtrays, designer condiments (that's salt and pepper pots to you) and the like.

PAUL SMITH 41–44 Floral Street, WC2 (also Avery Row, W1). Smith continues his Floral Street takeover. The 3,000 square feet of 41–42 play host to the fancier end of the range – divided in a department store fashion – while 43 and 44 display



the Smith Standards and Smith Sports respectively.

RED OR DEAD 61 Neal Street, WC2 (also Camden, Kensington Market and Rupert St). This increasingly successful operation is the bouncing baby of Wayne Hemmingsway, himself the son of former pugilist and Red Indian, Billy Two Rivers. The Covent Garden shop sports heart wedgies, chunky slip-ons (for men), watch-strap shoes, neo-rugby boots and, of course, more DMs than you might care to poke a stick at. Red Or Dead have a "special relationship" with the great Doctor Marten – still alive, white-haired and living in West Germany.

ROBE NOIRE 66 Great Queen St, WC2. The most

inspiring women's dress-hire shop in London. Here you can rent, for reasonable prices, such period delights as enormous Jane Russell-style evening dresses or bladelike Audrey Hepburn cocktail suits, which come with all the accessories thoughtfully provided. Intelligent and tasteful shop assistants kit you out with charm and tact, and the designs are continually changed and updated.

LE SET 115 Fulham Rd, SW3. A far cry from the average hi-fi and video shop, this is the place where the well-dressed and well-heeled buy their electrical equipment more for the design than the performance. As the name suggests, it's a pretentious but wonderful museum of gadgets – not least, the most bizarre-looking speakers in London and VCRs the size of a matchbox. The sort of place where you'll find people choosing a TV on the basis of whether or not it complements the wallpaper.

SLAM CITY SKATES Neals Yard, WC1. The basement houses Rough Trade Records; upstairs – ace training shoes (Cons), dazzling skateboards and skateboard accessories and Stussy's cult clothes and stickers. As intimidating as Browns to those who know nothing about skateboarding.

SOHO DESIGN 263 Kings Rd, SW3. Peter Leonard has yet to come up with anything that lives up to his black gothic-backed chairs of three years ago. Nevertheless, the Kings Rd shop is worth looking in on. The Poland Street headquarters are now trade only.

SPRINT 39 Floral St, WC2 (also Kings Road). Good selection of affordable menswear including Soap Studio, Campagna Delle Pelli. Two Guy and others. The staff seem to change their suits every five minutes – stay for an hour and you'll probably see everything in stock pass backwards and forwards before your eyes.

STEPHEN JONES 29 Heddon St, W1. The illustrious bald milliner and his hardworking team lurk in this luxurious basement. Always a hive of activity around Ascot time, Jones creates à la carte

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confections all year round for those wealthy enough to afford such things. It's worth getting to know Mary, the French receptionist, if only to gain knowledge of sale time, when hats normally priced at £300 are reduced to £50.

TIFFANY & CO 25 Old Bond St, W1. The prettiest jewellers' windows possible – very witty and just how Holly Golightly would have loved them. In the luxurious interior, people whose windpipes are lined in fur purchase Elsa Peretti pens and Paloma Picasso jewellery (which constantly reminds those who care that she isn't her father). Tiffany's own far more special collection is, of course, also available.

TODDLER TOYS 4 Harriet St, SW1. London's most exclusive and delightful toy shop, specialising in quality goodies for one- to six-year-olds. Terence Trent D'Arby buys toy monkeys here and Mick Jagger purchased 'Spot-Bot', a battery-operated robot. All soft toys are handmade and you can even buy miniature Chippendale tables (just the thing for the upmarket toddler) – a snip at £60.

TOKYO BOOGIE BEAT 17 Shorts Gardens, WC2. Tin robots, exotic T-shirts, playful socks, enamelled Batman lunchboxes, Felix The Cat mugs... Tat for Japanese schoolchildren becomes essential designer produce for West One gift-givers.

VIVIENNE WESTWOOD 6 Davies Rd, W1 (also 430 Kings Rd, SW10). Shiny, brand-new Mayfair home for the collection of one of the world's best, most original designers. Westwood's arrogant and sexy clothes dazzle the eyes, whilst captivating accessories coax wallets out of pockets in seconds. Several plateaux beyond the old World's End store, which is beginning to look just a little tatty these days.

WATCH GALLERY 129 Fulham Rd, SW3. This tiny shop displays its vast and impressive collection of timepieces in glass museum cases, with pricetags ranging from two to six figures. Service is precise, and occasionally a little snooty.

WAY-IN at Harrods, Brompton Rd, SW1. Still (with the exception of the Food Halls) the best department in Harrods, Way-In is divided neatly into three: menswear on one side (Paul Smith, Roser Marce, Guess, Williewear), women's clothes on the other (Richmond-Cornejo, English



If you want to know the time... The Watch Gallery



GINO SPRIO

Eccentrics, Jasper Conran) and objects and gadgets in the middle – vases, watches, holograms and the indispensable BLITZ T-shirts.

WILLIEWEAR 56 Neal Street, WC2 (also St Christophers Place, W1). It's two years since Willi Smith died, and although the Williewear range is nothing like as exciting as it used to be, it's still good and reliable and classic in style. Cropped single-breasted jackets, classic trousers, walking shorts. They are not expensive. As the late Willi Smith himself once said, "I don't design for the Queen, but for the people who watch her."

WOODHOUSE 42 South Molton St, W1 (and branches). Reliable source of masculine low-key cool. Off-the-peg designer suits, wide cotton pants and attractive sweaters in a low-pressure environment. Service is usually cheerful if a bit hit-and-miss sometimes. Not too wild, not too boring, not too cheap. Ideal for girlfriends buying presents.

WORLD 27 Litchfield St, WC2. World is a big success story. Forming an immaculate commercial circle, Michael and Gerlinde Kostiff sell in order to travel, and travel in order to buy. Quite the best T-shirts that it's possible to buy, along with the most

unexpected and amusing accessories from all over the world – Thai girls dancing hats, huge great Salt 'n' Pepa earrings, Brazilian sequinned bikinis and gaucho pants, Indian jewellery and fearful tarantulas frozen for all time as perspex paperweights.

WORLD SERVICE LIMITED 68 Neal Street, WC2. High-quality men's tailoring in high-quality cloth for the sardonically sensitive young gent. Best buy – slip-on brogue boots at £79.50.

YOHJI YAMAMOTO 165 Sloane St, SW1. Designer heaven. The most expensive, beautiful, stark Japanese frocks housed in a spacious, cool environment where you can take your time and choose from rails and rails of women's and menswear. Stern assistants rake in the cash, thereby absolving the poor shopper from feelings of huge guilt having parted with so much money.

ZONE at Harvey Nichols, 109 Knightsbridge, SW1. The basement area of Knightsbridge's 'other store' – a kind of Way-In downstairs. Containing A La Carte's beautiful and hideously expensive make-up, Junior Gaultier, and Joe Caseley-Hayford's harsh yet feminine suiting, as well as masses of fun, reasonably priced accessories.

165 Sloane Street, SW1 London
01 235 1808

Yohji Yamamoto







schizo

PHOTOGRAPHY —
MAKE UP —
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FEATHERS WORLD



phrenia

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DEBBIE BUNN @ PIN UP

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MARK STEVENS AND

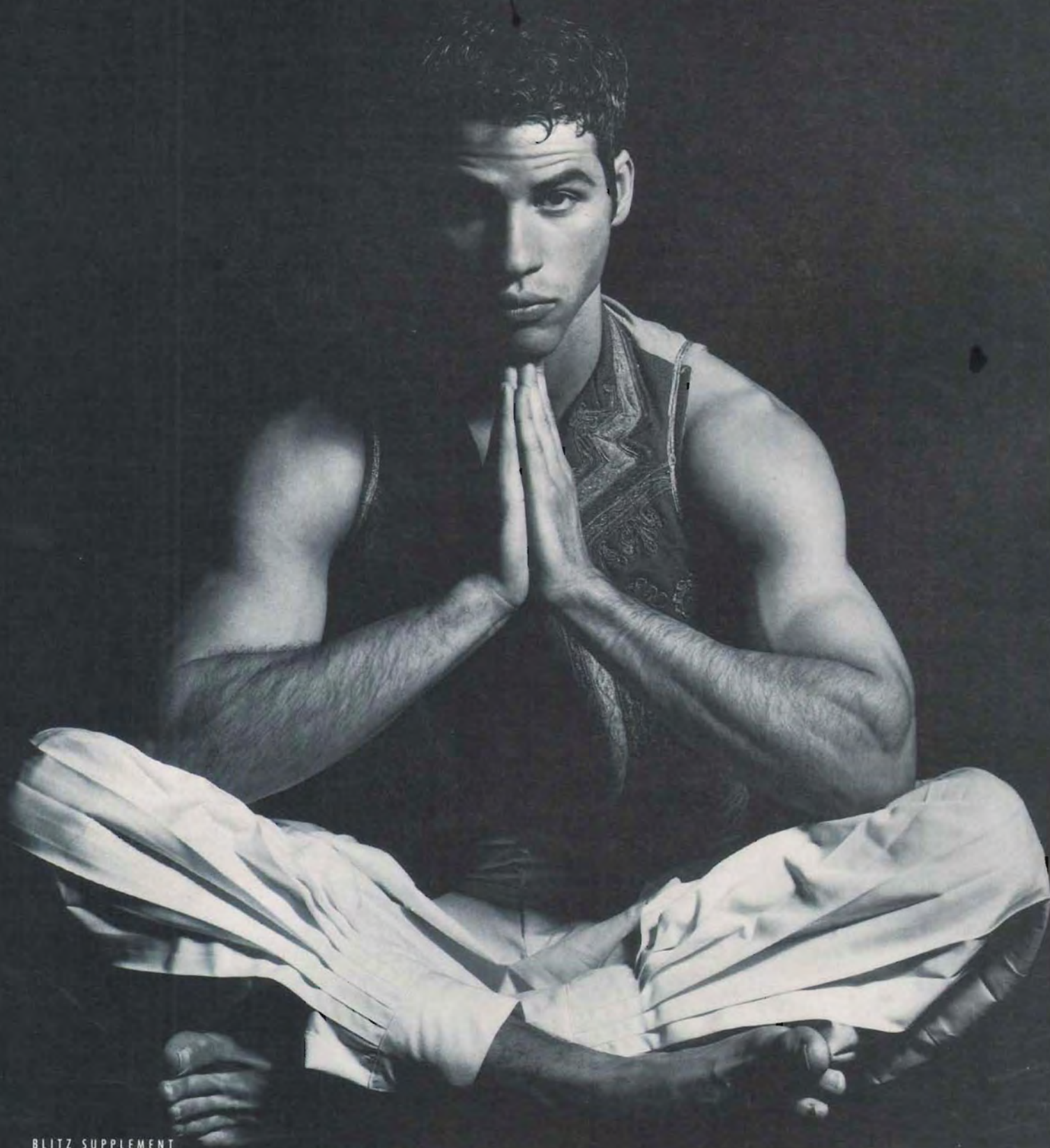
DAVID DONALD @ MODELS ONE

JENNIFER JONES AND

JOHN FRANCIS @ SELECT

ANITA TORNEE @ STORM

BIKINI AND OSTRICH WORLD





HAT WORLD
EARRINGS/CURTAIN HOOPS JOHN LEWIS
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HAT WORLD



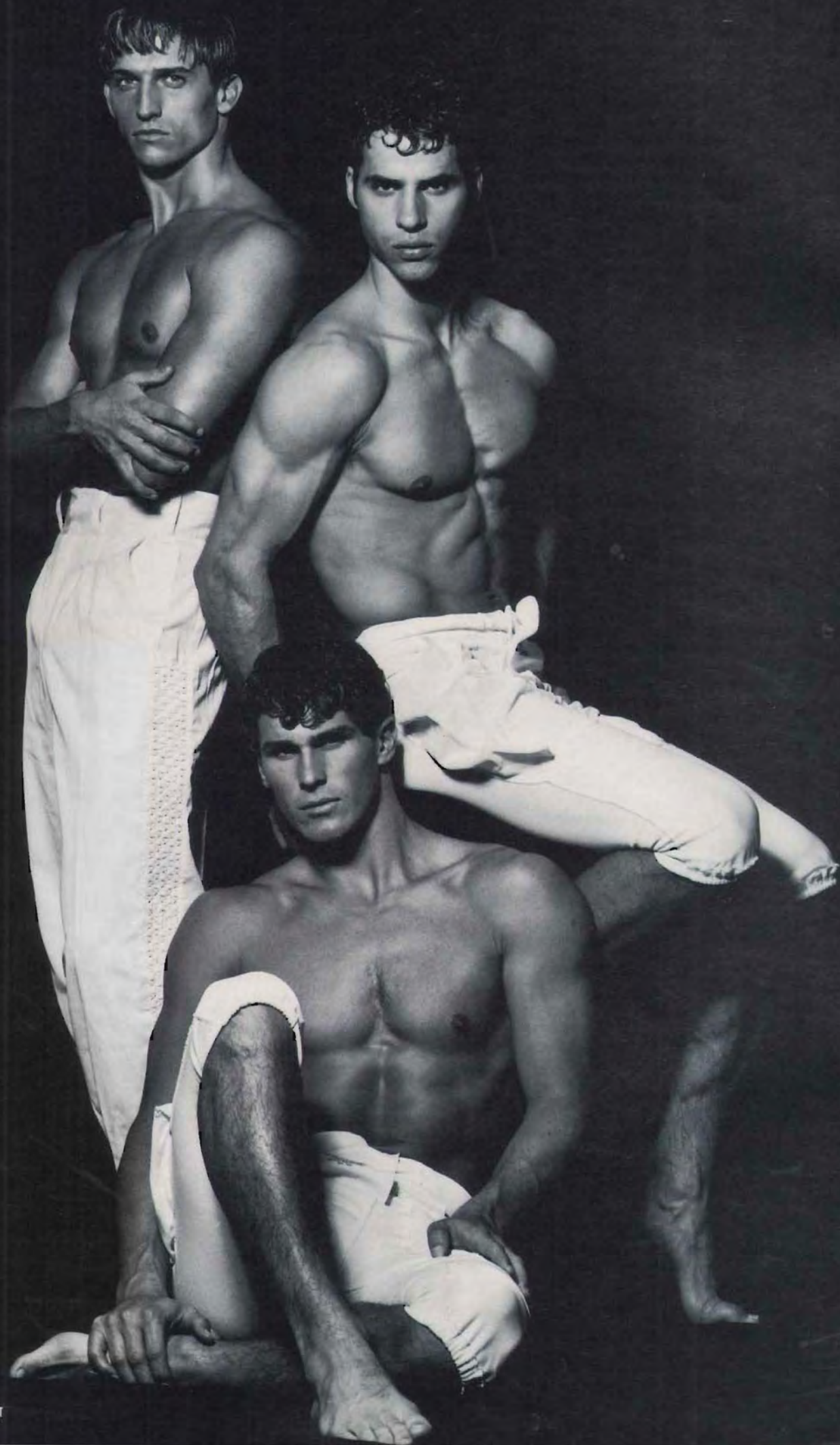
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SKIRT HOLLYWOOD TOYSTORE HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD

LEI JANE PACKER



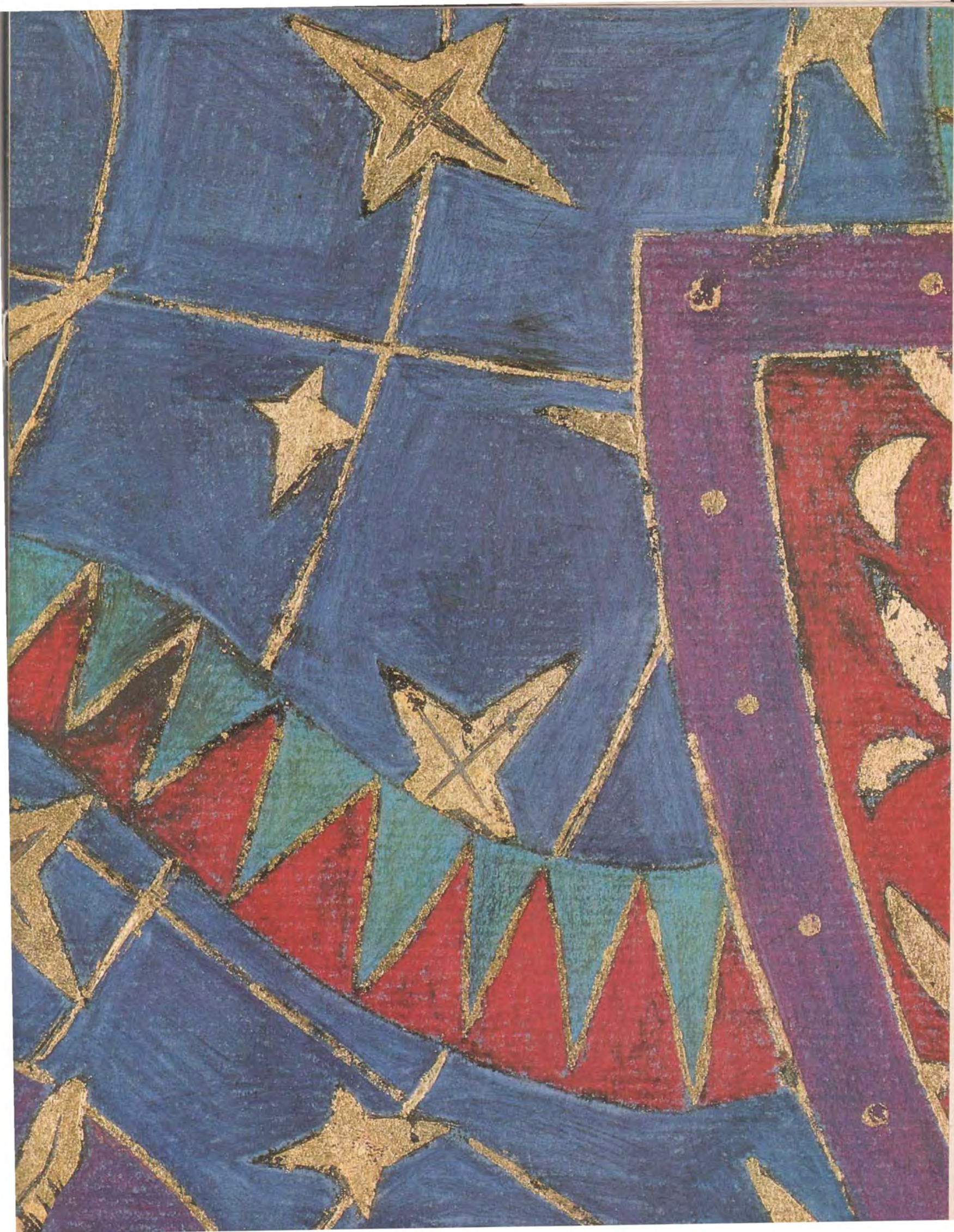




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HANGING OUT

BLITZ, in association with **perrier**, presents a selection of the capital's finest or foremost bars and eating-places.

In the old days, there used to be specific varieties of food — French, Italian, Chinese and so on. Nowadays, however, there's a new school, something between 'Modern European' and the nouvelle cuisine equivalent to World Music. Restaurants like Alastair Little, Le Caprice and others have thrown open the boundaries of traditional French cuisine to incorporate influences from the rest of Europe, the Americas, and the Orient; meanwhile, and more unusually, restaurateurs such as Amin Ali (The Red Fort or Jamdani) and Lawrence Leung (the Zen chain) have reversed the process, bringing European and other techniques to traditional Indian and Chinese food. The restaurants listed below represent our selection of some of the best in terms of food and atmosphere that London has to offer — not just the newer, more fashionable and more expensive places, but also some reliable eateries to fall back on. Space prevents us from giving details of average price or menus, but you can get more information by ringing the Restaurant Switchboard, a free advisory service, on (01) 888 8080. *Compiled by Simon Tesler*

Reports: Simon Tesler, Tom Eliot, Ian Parker

ALASTAIR LITTLE 49 Frith St, W1 (734 5183). Much hyped media haunt. The food is mostly fabulous and well worth the fuss, but the reputation has attracted a mixed bunch of over-familiar faces, and the tables are so close you can't help but overhear or be overheard. A lower-priced basement is due to open later this year providing the licensing problems can be overcome.

BAR ITALIA 22 Frith St, W1 (437 4520). Best frequented on the nights when it's packed to bursting with Italians, there to catch up on videos of Italian football which are broadcast on the huge TV screen.

BEAK STREET 41 Beak St, W1 (734 0316). The only joint in Soho which has anti-macassars to protect its upholstery from designer hair grease. This — coupled with a thin extended floor plan — gives brand new Beak's the pleasing feel of an intercity Pullman. Imagine the 17.35 from Liverpool Street decorated with surprising good taste, and filled only with St Martins graduates and magazine columnists. All change at Freds.

BIBENDUM Michelin Building, 81 Fulham Rd, SW3 (581 5817). A much celebrated gastronomarium set in the splendour of the Conran Shop's Michelin

building. Wallet-bursting prices, but the food — masterminded by equally celebrated chef Simon Hopkinson — truly lives up to them in a large and fabulous room dominated by stained-glass windows, huge armchairs and widely spread tables. Wonderful. The **OYSTER BAR** downstairs is gentler on the pocket and almost as fabulous.

BRAGANZA 56 Frith St, W1 (437 5412). Like L'Escargot, Braganza is on three floors and gets more expensive the higher up you eat. The ground floor bar, with large doors that allow drinkers to spill out onto the street, is more industrial than French in style and a favoured watering hole for people dressed in black. Upstairs the decor is less sober, dominated by magnificent murals and a cutaway floor. Be warned, however: the restaurant was recently acquired by Trusthouse Forte, and the quality of the food has consequently taken an alarming dip.

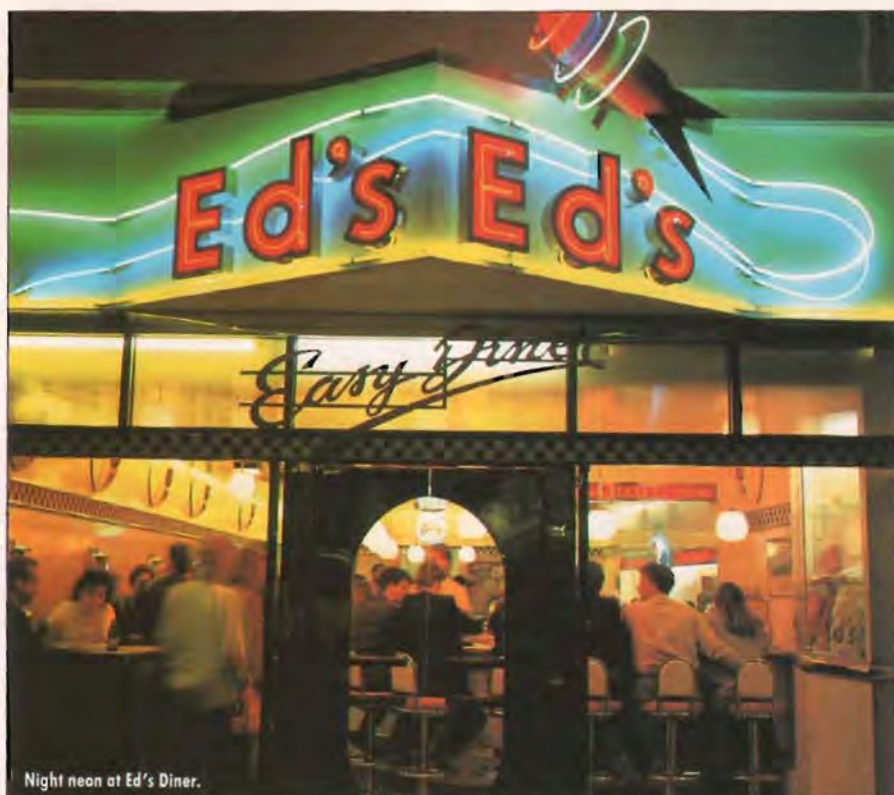
BRASSERIE ST QUENTIN 243 Brompton Rd, SW7 (589 8005). Very chic, very French, this is probably the most stylish (and least flashy) restaurant in an area traditionally frequented by spendthrift tourists. After a couple of bottles of Chablis, you'd be forgiven for thinking you've been transported to Paris' left bank. The food can be rather rich — and expensive — but is extremely good. Less pricey but just as good is the brasserie's stablemate, the **GRILL ST QUENTIN** (581 8377), a little further down the road towards Harrods.

LE CAPRICE Arlington St, SW1 (629 2239). Like Langan's but with fewer hangers-on. Definitely the restaurant to go on weekdays if you want to witness power-lunching at its most powerful and overpowering. The place is stuffed wall-to-wall with actors, agents, writers, media moguls and young royalty. More fun is the casually wasted morning-after atmosphere to be experienced at Sunday brunchtime.

CHEZ GERARD 8 Charlotte St, W1 (636 4975). Busy and bustling French bistro which, on a good day, serves one of the best steaks in London, as well as absolutely vast bacon-and-avocado salads. Relaxed and reasonably priced at about £15 a head without wine.

CHUEN CHENG KU 17 Wardour St, W1 (437 1398). Huge, bare, brightly lit Chinese restaurant off Leicester Square. In fact the harsh environment and spectacularly rude (but entertaining) waiters are a necessary part of the experience. Lunchtime dim sum, selected from trolleys, are the speciality. A good sign — the place is full of Chinese, many of them eating real Chinese food, not the bastardised Western version. It's worth a try if you overlook the fact that most of it looks as if it's derived from the genitalia of large animals.

CLARKE'S 124 Kensington Church St, W8 (221 9225). Useful outpost in an area not well-served for places to eat. A bright, pleasant, West Coast-style environment, usually filled with publishing types from the Hamish Hamilton/Penguin complex just south of Ken High Street.



Night neon at Ed's Diner.

DOMÉ 354 Kings Rd, SW3 (352 7611) Also NW3, N1, EC4, W4. The Kings Rd branch is the hippest – often painfully so – of the Domé chain of pub conversions. The French-style food is fine, but this is really a bar more than anything else. Chiswick is the latest outpost and is pleasantly relaxed compared to the others.

ED'S DINER 12 More St, W1 (also at Kings Rd, SW10). Ed Debevnik's in LA was the inspiration for this carnivore's heaven. Shiny chrome and red leather decor and tiny personal jukeboxes providing ear-splitting music all make for a very jolly time indeed. And it has to be said: they have the best, most authentic burgers in town.

L'ESCARGOT 48 Greek St, W1 (437 2679). Despite stiff competition, still one of London's first-choice restaurants for the Soho media and film cognoscenti. While other such haunts – Braganza, for example, or the Soho Brasserie – often fade quickly, L'Escargot retains its appeal. The ground floor bar/brasserie serves a small but reliable choice of light dishes and is the place to be seen at lunchtime (particularly if you can bag a table in the window). The restaurant upstairs is on two floors – big bucks are exchanged here and your star status is only confirmed if you are personally greeted by Elena Salvoni, the *maitresse d'*.

LA FAMIGLIA 7 Langton St, SW10 (351 0761). Upmarket, bustling Italian restaurant behind World's End. In the evenings, the waiters merrily shout across the tables at each other, competing with the diners to see who can make the most noise, and the air is filled with the smell of basil, parmesan cheese and ground pepper. The garden is a great place to eat in the summer and, for meat-eaters, the teenage loin of lamb is out of this world.

FIFTY-ONE FIFTY-ONE Chelsea Cloisters, Sloane Ave, SW3 (730 5151). Cajun food – the regional style of cuisine originating from New Orleans and Louisiana – is almost impossible to find in England, and this is the only decent restaurant in London which specialises in it. The food – like Catfish With Pecan Butter, Seafood Gumbo With Dirty Rice and Blackened Prime Rib – looks and sounds spectacular, particularly when it arrives at the table sizzling loudly on a wood-and-metal platter. Much depends on whether you care for the cuisine, but the ambience – plenty of Danny Lane glass sculpture – is fabulous and entertaining, despite (or thanks to) the large numbers of vociferous Americans.



Danny Lane Glass sculpture at Fifty-One Fifty-One.

FREDERICK'S Camden Passage, N1 (359 2888). Smart, airy restaurant with a large enclosed conservatory and rooms with names like 'Clarence'. Large, varied menu, with a good vegetarian selection.

FREUD'S 198 Shaftesbury Ave, WC2 (240 9933). Downstairs from the shop, there's a café/bar for lunchtime eating and evening drinking in the company of sexy young fashion students saving up for a membership to Freds.

GALLERY RENDEZVOUS 53/55 Beak St, W1 (734 0445). Smart and most upmarket corner of the Rendezvous chain (also in Richmond and Kew). The main room is quiet and elegant, and often inhabited by film people; the menu offers a wide selection, but the set-meals are highly recommended. A word of caution – people have been known to develop a serious habit for the spare-ribs here.

HARVEY'S 2 Bellevue Rd, SW17 (672 0114). The restaurant – run by flamboyant and wild-haired chef Marco-Pierre White – has been recently expanded, and continues to impress. Food and decor are both great and there's a splendid view across Wandsworth Common. Best restaurant south of the river.

IKKYU 67 Tottenham Court Rd, W1 (436 6169). Bright, cheerful and thoroughly unpretentious restaurant, despite the occasional presence of self-consciously trendy celebrities and fashionable musicbiz types. The authenticity of Ikkyu's atmosphere and surprisingly inexpensive cuisine is confirmed by the high ratio of Japanese regulars, who sit quaffing whisky from their own personal bottles while discussing business over sushi and other such fantastic and mysterious concoctions.

JAMDANI 34 Charlotte St, W1 (636 1178). Restaurateur Amin Ali has changed the face of Indian food in London. Despite the success of *The Last Days Of The Raj* and *The Red Fort*, this is probably the jewel in his crown, a restaurant so far removed from the traditional image of the



Setting the place at Jamdani.

GINO SPRILO

local curry-house as to be in a class of its own. Designed by Fitch & Co, the quiet main dining area is lit by a ceiling skylight, and boasts stone floors, tapestry wall-hangings and widely spaced tables. The regional food is challenging and unusual. Now, Ali is contemplating a new frontier – he has been invited to open Moscow's first Indian restaurant later this year.

JACK'S PLACE 12 York Rd, SW11 (228 8519). Don't be put off by the exterior, which resembles that of a burned-out, boarded-up drycleaners – this is where you'll find one of the best traditional English Sunday roasts in London. For £8.95, you get a huge set-lunch (choice of beef, pork or lamb and veg) which will leave you quite unable to move before you even get to the pudding. Don't dress up – the walls are covered in the dismembered ties of past customers, snipped off by imposing chef and proprietor Jack King.

JOE'S CAFE 126 Draycott Ave, SW3 (225 2217). Across the road from the new superstore lies the eaterie-offshoot of the Joseph Ettedgui empire. Light brasserie-style food at high prices served by occasionally snooty staff. *L'EXPRESS*, the café at Joseph Pour La Maison in Sloane St is also recommended for lighter fare.

LANGAN'S Stratton Street, W1 (493 6437). An astonishingly hardy perennial, still the best place

to see and be seen in London. The sad absence of the paralytically pissed Peter Langan has done much to discourage those masochists who came half-hoping he would vomit on their table, but the restaurant has retained its wonderful bustling atmosphere of tarnished bohemian elegance. At lunchtime, the place is packed to the gills with businessmen wearing suits and brandishing portable phones; at night, you have to fight your

way in past the paparazzi. If anything, famous faces are more common now that there's no danger of being manhandled by the late owner. The menu is pricey (expect around £20 a head excluding wine), but big, with a large variety of brasserie staples. Try the Souffle Aux Epinards, and whatever you do, don't accept a table upstairs, which is strictly for grannies and has-beens.

LEGENDS 29/30 Old Burlington St, W1 (437 9933). With a long history as a nightclub, Legends has also blossomed as a lunchtime eaterie, and is a good alternative to other restaurants in the area. Eva Jiricna's black and chrome decor, excellent brasserie – style lunches and a well-stocked bar make it a favourite for media moguls and business whiz kids.

MAISON BERTAUX 28 Greek St, W1 (437 6007). One of Soho's oldest teashops, presided over for years by Mand Mme Vignaud, who recently retired and sold the business to the charming and capable Michelle.

MITCHELL O'BRIEN DELI 2 St Anne's Court, W1 (434 9941). Not a sandwich shop or delicatessen as its name suggests, but a true blue New York – style bar and restaurant. The bar is loud and almost invariably packed with advertising suits and black-clad media types. The selection of beers is spot-on, and on the cocktail front, the Stoli Madras, at £2.95, is not to be missed – Stolichnaya vodka, cranberry juice and a dash of orange. During the day, you can also get a fine range of deli-style food – bagels, knishes and the like. For those who prefer something a little more substantial, the restaurant is good in the evenings, and ideal for a large early-morning breakfast.

MON PLAISIR 21 Monmouth St, WC2 (836 7243). A long-standing Covent Garden favourite. This classic-style bistro is dark and a little cramped downstairs, but the sunny, skylighted top floor is wonderful. The food on the blackboard menu is typically French café fare, including snails, frogs' legs, stews and roasts, but best value of all is the £18 three-course set dinner which includes steak and the best chips in town.



Langan's interior.

GINO SPRILO



Art Deco at Mitchell O'Brien Deli.

GINO SPRIO

192 192 Kensington Park Rd, W11 (229 0482). The way West London likes it: high-quality, solidly bourgeois merchandise slightly dirtied down for apologetic punters (hence named after directory enquiries). A fig's throw from Portobello, jostling for attention with the Crucial and Special Photographers Galleries, 192 serves excellent cuisine of the fishy, nutty, goat cheese variety. Overheard conversation will feature snatches on life in LA recording studios ("Nile was not impressed"), and the need to "firm up one's life decisions".

OPERA TERRACE 45 East Terrace, The Piazza, WC2 (379 0666). Smart and stylish eating place perched above Covent Garden's Piazza, and aimed firmly at the after-theatre mob. The restaurant half is plush and monied; the Brasserie side is a little funkier, busier and less overbearing. Great view.

ORSO 27 Wellington St, WC2 (240 5269). Successful, smarter brother to Joe Allen's next door. Good Italian food – fresh, flown in weekly from Italy where necessary – and a relaxed atmosphere, increasingly favoured by media suits.

PRESSÉ 54 Frith St, W1 (437 0666). A clear, bright California-style interior in which to stuff down the fresh and unusual cuisine. The food is largely, but not exclusively, vegetarian – the salads are amongst the best in London – but this is first and foremost a juice bar. The exotic, often unusual selection includes banana, passionfruit and orange, melon and ginger, pineapple and lime and so on.

SMITHS 33 Shelton St, WC2 (379 0310). Situated in the basement of an art gallery, Smiths is still one of the best places to eat in restaurant-stuffed Covent Garden. The cool and relaxed Anglo-French atmosphere makes it a good place to both eat and talk without being overheard. The food is reliable and unassuming.

WÓDKA 12 Albans Grove, W8 (937 6513). It's unlikely that matt-black designer chairs and chic diners are a trademark of Warsaw's nightlife. And yet Wódka has brought a little Polish designer chic to Kensington. The food is fine, slightly more robust than the usual nouvelle cuisine's miniscule portions. It's the vodka, however, that attracts the

multitude – a range of over twenty selections including overproof, tarragon, plum, bison-grass and lemon, each fairly priced at £1.50 a shot. Best of all is the honey vodka – warm, sweet and the closest thing you'll ever experience to God's gift from Heaven. If you're flush, a carafe of it may be the best £16 you'll ever spend.

ZAZOU 74 Charlotte St, W1 (637 1285). Conveniently situated between Channel 4 and Saatchi & Saatchi, and around the corner from the BLITZ offices, this arch media hangout is decorated in the style of an old colonial watering hole. Be warned: the restaurant and brasserie are not cheap, and the quality of the food is often unreliable. Nevertheless, the bar is just fine – a two-level job boasting extra-large wicker chairs, potted palms and a chubby pianist who has to climb a ladder to serenade the seasoned drinkers. It's packed most nights, particularly Fridays, and getting a drink from the sulky waitresses – most of whom seem to speak only French – is occasionally a challenge. But it all adds to the experience. Keep an eye open: the large table of noisy drunks in the corner probably work for BLITZ.

ZEN CENTRAL 20/22 Queen St, WC2 (629 8089). Latest of the Zen chain, set in the heart of Mayfair.



GINO SPRIO

The main room is long and elegant, and features a cute chopsticks-and-rice carpet motif. As with the other Zens, this is declared a monosodium glutamate-free zone, and the food is a clever blend of Chinese staples and nouvelle adaptations from other cultures both Western and Eastern. The mixed hors d'oeuvres are terrific. **ZENW3** 83 Hampstead High St (794 7863) is also recommended.



GINO SPRIO

On the rock at Wódka.

The sad and steady decline of the pub has led to an explosion of new, smarter drinking-venues, particularly around the busy centres of Soho and Covent Garden. The most notable development has been the emergence of a profusion of upmarket private drinking-clubs. No relation to the seedy after-hours drinking-dens of old, these are smart, expensive bar/restaurants catering for media and advertising types or people looking for a pre-club club to go on from. Restaurants also — like Braganza, Zazou and others — have seen the advantages to opening up their own bar areas for those who prefer a liquid breakfast/lunch/dinner. Another change has been the springing up of 'one-night' drinking clubs (Fight, for example), which take over an existing premises for specific nights — the early evening equivalent to more familiar one-nighters. This is our selection of some of the city's more outstanding haunts. You should bear in mind that most of the private clubs require new members to be proposed by existing ones — so you'll need to know someone before you can get in. *Compiled by Paul Mathur.*

Reports: Paul Mathur, Tom Eliot.

BAR ITALIA 22 Frith St, W1. See Eating.

BIDDY MULLIGAN'S 205 Kilburn High Road, NW6. A wild pub in County Kilburn, for advanced revellers only. The presence of a bouncer on the door should warn you to the dangers within where, unless you are desperately in search of the proverbial crack, you won't last five minutes. Life as a drinking contest with yourself? This is the place.

BROWNS Great Queen St, WC2 (831 0802). If a members' club was a pop star, this would be George Michael. Aspiring adult sophistication and coy elegance are offset by a pink leatherette VIP bar upstairs (gold membership). A regular bevy of pseudo Page Three girls and a mighty proliferation of paparazzi are always to be found (or endured). Membership: £250 (silver); £500 (gold).

CJ'S 30 Acre Lane, SW9. A curiously dreadful-looking wine bar, but packed at the weekends with refugees from the nearby ten-pin bowling centre. A resident Sunday-night jazz band can play almost a dozen different versions of 'Cry Me A River', all at tempos far removed from that designated by the composer.

CLUB ROYAL at Wall Street, 14 Bruton Place, W1 (493 0630). A glorious pseudo-Versailles venue,

but the £7 admission charge, ludicrously overpriced drinks and needlessly strict door policy make the Friday night club a prospect for only the well-heeled or physically beautiful. If you feel qualified, you can also drop in on a Wednesday when the Wall Street Affair night sets out to provide competition to Leicester Square's Cafe de Paris.

COLVILLE ROSE 186 Portobello Road, W11 (229 9645). A welcome West London addition to the members' club scene, run by Rose Boyt and designed to give an atmosphere akin to 'your own front room'. Cheap membership for card-carrying Freds members and an air of unpredictability straddles its two floors. Good food is promised, but the real appeal should be to Notting Hill's artistic community, who will no longer have to suffer the nearby Warwick pub in order to have some good drinking conversations. Private membership: £100.

DIVE BAR Gerrard Street, WC2. The Chinatown location, in the basement of a pub and just down the road from the Wag, ensures a young, lively crowd and an atmosphere of preparatory hedonism. A place to oil the gullet for a long night ahead.

DOMES 354 Kings Rd, SW3. Also NW3, N1, EC4, W4. See Eating.

FIGHT at Clown's, 63 Frith Street, W1 (734 3312). A Wednesday night pre-club club (8.30pm-12.30am), where the business of serious drinking is deflected by all manner of roving entertainment — including massage, tarot, a do-it-yourself Graffiti Wall and an in-house photographer. Fight crops up again on a Saturday at the Captain's Cabin, Norris Street, Piccadilly, where much of the same malarkey is to be found.

FREDS 4 Carlisle Street, W1 (439 4284). Currently the most fashionable of London's members-only hangouts. Membership allows you access to three floors, including a food bar and a dancefloor. The clientele is a mixture of television, music and accountancy types, invariably cramming the place to the sleek designer rafters. Lippy bar staff offset the often cloying careerism of the clientele. The sort of place where deals are made, promises are broken and swift halves turn to nights of glorious excess. Private membership: £150 (£200 joint membership for couples).

FREUD'S 198 Shaftesbury Ave, WC2. See Eating.



GINO SPAD

Palatial splendour at Club Royal.



GROUCHO CLUB 45 Dean Street, W1 (439 4685). An atmosphere somewhere between a monastery and a brothel in this, the most established of the members' clubs. A warren of rooms including a bar and restaurant with a predominantly older crowd than that to be found at Freds. A typical night will find Peter York, Jeffrey Bernard and Jack Nicholson cheek-by-jowl with Fleet Street journalists and Covent Garden advertising execs. Drinks are expensive, but the proliferation of expense accounts makes such an observation irrelevant. Around 7pm, the hushed tones of post-work power meetings are drowned by the swish of knives being hurled at the backs of acquaintances. Not for the faint hearted. Plans are apparently afoot for an extension to the building, and presumably one day Soho will be renamed Groucho. Private membership: £75 (under 28); £150 (over 28).

HENRY AFRICA'S 9 Young St, W8 (937 9403). Home from home for most of the staff of nearby Kensington Market, this rather shabby wine bar has a certain bizarre charm. A good place to find numerous Siouxsie lookalikes fishing their nose-studs out of their pints.

KARAOKE BAR West Street, WC2. If you like a singalong with your drink then you can do a lot worse than here. Choose songs from the large catalogue on show and sing to an accompanying back-up tape and video, while other guests stare at you. Entrance is free, but you have to buy at least one drink. Packed with Japanese, for whom this sort of public self-humiliation is a common pastime.

LIMELIGHT 136 Shaftesbury Ave, W1 (434 0572). The old haunt opens again under new management, and with a new policy as a private club. The downstairs is now a second dancefloor, and there's a vodka and champagne bar upstairs, as well as a bistro-style

restaurant in what used to be the VIP room. A brave revamp – only time will tell whether it's worth it or not. Membership: £150 (charter membership of £100 during April).

MAPLE LEAF 41 Maiden Lane, WC2 (240 2843). Would be one of London's best pubs were it not for the current crowd, a rag-bag mixture of secretaries, theatregoers and tourists. A little bit of London that's intended to be forever Canada, it serves Canadian beer on draught, the sort of food that lumberjacks no doubt live on, and regular information about ice hockey scores from back home. Alas, good intentions are wasted when everyone who turns up wears white stilettos or Bri-nylon suits.

MITCHELL O'BRIEN DELI 2 St Anne's Court, W1. See Eating.

MOSCOW 62 Frith Street, W1 (434 1871). Another members' club, with a high percentage of advertising people amongst its cool clientele. Rather more subdued than its peers, it does have a well-stocked bar, but is hampered by a clinical interior design that does little to encourage rosy-cheeked bonhomie. Private membership: £175 (also lower corporate rates).

606 90 Lots Road, SW10 (352 5953). The Jazz Life doesn't come much more pseud than at this place, where boho musicians and like-minded associates come to while away the wee small hours (12-4am). You can drink only red or white wine, a constriction that will surely

have the likes of Charlie Parker spinning in their graves.

SOHO BRASSERIE 23 Old Compton Street, W1 (439 9301). Fading from fashion after Robert Elms and his buddies' eulogies a few years back. One of the few places in London to serve Belgium's fabulous Duvel beer, but you'll need to quaff lots of it to be able to put up with the constant babble of Soho bores pretending they're in Paris. Merde, as they say.

2 BRYDGES PLACE off St Martins' Lane, WC2 (836 1436). One of the best-kept secrets in members-clubland (but rapidly becoming less so), if only for the fact that the place is almost impossible to find. Disaffected bohemians populate its shabbily endearing two-floor Georgian interior. Numbers Richard Jobson among its members. Wow. Private membership: approx. £150.

ZANZIBAR 30 Great Queen St, WC2 (405 6153). Stranded to the east of Covent Garden and about ten years behind the times, Zanzibar comes on like something off an old Roxy Music sleeve. Garish design, expensive drinks and, despite the presence of many comedians (some professional, some just built that way) has a largely uninspiring clientele. A kind of Salvation Army hostel for the upwardly mobile. For all its drawbacks, however, this is the original media drinking club. Private membership: approx £100.

ZAZOU 74 Charlotte St, W1. See Eating.



HANGING UP

"We're trying to create a situation where anyone can come in and look at, appreciate and *buy* art, without any discrimination or hierarchy or limits." So says Kitty Bowler whose Crucial Gallery is at the forefront of the new group attempting to break down the old prejudices and snobberies of the art world. Galleries like Crucial, the Young Unknowns and the Thumb have succeeded in making art accessible to most pockets and most tastes, while others — the more established, higher-priced places — have benefitted from the surge in popularity that the new venues have encouraged. This is a small selection of London's most intriguing exhibition spaces. *Compiled by Andrew Renton.*

AIR GALLERY 6/8 Rosebery Avenue, EC1 March sees the formal demise of Air as an exhibiting gallery. A new operation will concentrate specifically on large-scale projects with non-art institutions, such as the Stuart Brisley/Mya Balciglu collaborations in *The Guardian*. Watch this space.

ANTHONY D'OFFAY 9 & 23 Dering Street, W1 Broad selection of artists and very much a who's who on the international scene. Beuys installed rolls of felt, a piano and thermometer as 'Plight' just before he died. Warhol had them queuing down Dering Street for just a glimpse of his wig before his sad demise. Leigh Bowery is still very much alive after his recent performances with a couch and a few million sequins. Major shows this year include Carl André (the man responsible for the bricks at the Tate a while back), and a Gilbert & George charity show for Crusaid. Also Francesco Clemente and Anselm Kiefer (hot properties, Italian and German-style respectively). Grown-up artists and grown-up prices.

CRUCIAL 204 Kensington Park Road, W11 (also at 34/35 Dean Street, W1) Odd mix of art and interiors. Current exhibitors include Fred Beverton (featured recently in *BLITZ*), who creates 'flying-wing' reception tables, and Rob Leigh, who designed some costumes for the new *Batman* film and does witty things with little toys and other unlikely materials. Meanwhile, expect to find every conceivable car part used to create some quite unique furniture.

EDWARD TOTAH 13 Old Burlington Street, W1 Particularly good if you like your art Italian. The many established names here — including Boetti, Pistoletto, de Mario, Paolini and Palladino — tie

in neatly with the Royal Academy's Italian show. Forthcoming — a show of the Ecole de Paris of the 1950s including de Staël and Poliakoff. Newer work includes the homoerotic photomontages of Jean-Marc Prouveur.

FLOWERS EAST 199 Richmond Road, E8 (also **ANGELA FLOWERS GALLERY** at 11/12 Tottenham Mews, W1) Flowers East marked a brave new direction (not only geographically) for Angela and her son Matthew, both firmly committed to new British art. Established names such as Tom Phillips and Nicola Hicks are still moderately affordable, while the two galleries' huge selection of younger names should turn up the occasional valuable longterm prospect.

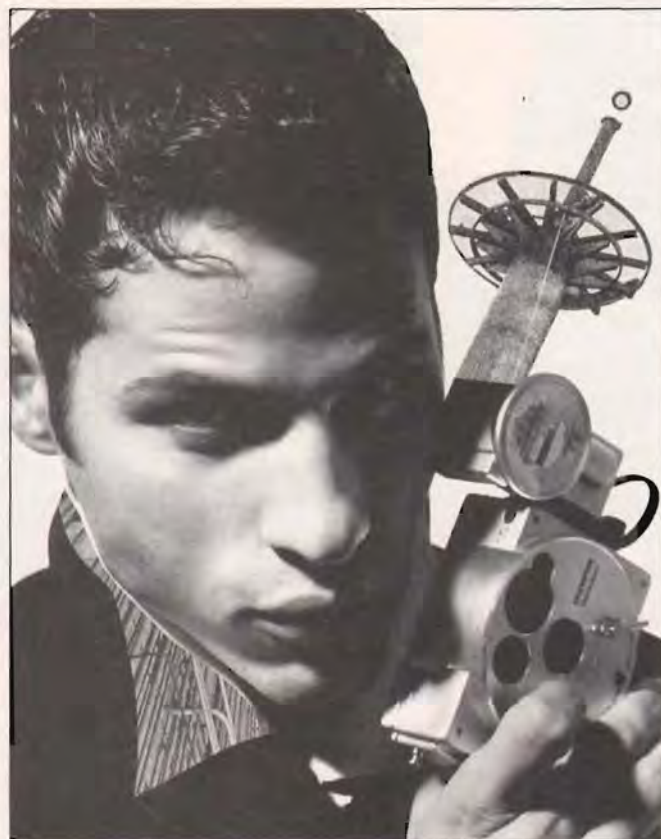
INTERIM ART 21 Beck Road, E8 Possibly the first of the new wave of galleries in the East End, Interim has given space to major names such as Richard Deacon, David Mach and, more recently, Jenny Holzer. Work is mostly minimal and/or conceptual. What you see here may well turn up in the more sanctified arena of the West End galleries a year or two later. Maureen O'Paley is Interim's arbiter of taste. Her worldwide extra-curricular curating should not overshadow Interim's own significant exchanges with New York and Germany. The gallery is set within the spartan rooms behind the facade of a terraced house — as spatially deceptive as Dr Who's Tardis. A unique experience, whatever is showing.

LISSEN GALLERY 67 Lisson St, NW1 The Lissen is tucked away in a part of town where the only other great cultural achievement is the finest fish-and-chip shop south of Watford. Superb collection of sculptors such as Anish Kapoor with his strange yet familiar shapes, Tony Cragg (last year's Turner Prize winner) shaping our leftovers. Others include John Hilliard, Julian Opie and Art & Language.



Interim Art (cognita). A gallery set in a terrace.

In April, Olympus will release onto the market a strictly limited edition of the astonishing O-Product camera. There has never been a camera like this before. It contains the same fully automatic mechanism as Olympus' superb AF10 compact camera — including fitted 35mm motor drive and auto load, auto focus, exposure and flash. But this is all housed within a gleaming aluminium body which combines deco design elements from the Thirties and Forties with a completely modern sleekness. Only 20,000 of these beautifully designed cameras — each individually numbered — will be available worldwide, and only 1,700 will go on sale in this country, priced at £299. In an exclusive competition, Olympus are offering three of these fabulous cameras to BLITZ readers. In order to have a chance of winning one, answer these three questions correctly:



WIN THE ULTIMATE CAMERA FROM OLYMPUS!

- 1) In which film did David Hemmings play a photographer who believes he has photographed a murder?
- 2) Which photographer shared a flat for some time in New York with singer Patti Smith?
- 3) Whose photographs are contained in the book *Goodbye Baby And Amen*?

Send your answers to "O-PRODUCT, BLITZ MAGAZINE, 40/42 NEWMAN STREET, LONDON W1P 3PA", to reach us before April 21st. The first three correct answers out of the proverbial hat will win a camera. ●



GINO SPRIO

MARLBOROUGH FINE ARTS 6 Albermarle Street, W1

On a fine day you may witness men in white overalls coming or going with a few million pounds' worth of Francis Bacon in their hands. The well-established roster includes Henry Moore, Larry Rivers, Ron Kitaj, Frank Auerbach, Paula Rego, Therese Oulton and Steven Campbell. Forthcoming shows by younger artists who seem ripe to be absorbed into the system include Dieter Hacker and Andrzej Jackowski.

NICOLA JACOBS 9 Cork Street, W1 Stylish publicity in the past has included the launching of a scheme allowing you to buy works of art 'on approval', as it were. The gallery concentrates mainly on young British artists. Louise Blair's highly sensitive, tortured figures contrast with Lisa Milroy's bright, misty paintings that elevate pairs of shoes, or a pile of neatly folded shirts from the banal to the canvas. A good record for women artists in particular.

NIGEL GREENWOOD 4 New Burlington Street, W1

Exciting range of art and *livres d'artistes*. Last year's Adrian Wiszniewski show was a highlight of the year. Other strongpoints include Christopher LeBrun's dark, mythical pieces and John Baldessari's recent photo collages based on Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. See also the quite unexpected collaboration of Barbara ('I shop therefore I am') Kruger and horror writer Stephen King on the art book, *My Pretty Pony* (complete with stainless steel cover and digital timepiece). Good value selection of prints and great bookshop downstairs.

PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY 5 & 8 Great Newport St, WC2 Well-established venue for photographic art with everything from modern conceptual to historic nostalgic.

SPECIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS' COMPANY 21 Kensington Park Rd, W11 Interesting selection of mostly young and upwardly mobile photographers. A good place to snap up the likes of David Hiscock and Ewan Fraser.

THUMB GALLERY 38 Lexington Street, W1 Most notable this year for the first London show of purely contemporary Russian art. Rarely radical – but then who is these days? – Thumb offers reasonably priced graphic work and paintings. Works by David Band, Fraser Taylor and other former Cloth members are usually to be found somewhere on the walls.

VICTORIA MIRO 21 Cork Street, W1 Strictly conceptual this one, and a breath of fresh air in

Cork Street. Works have included a stunning mound of pollen dust that, rumour has it, required serious restoration every time the door slammed or someone came into the gallery with hayfever. Ian Hamilton Finlay is perhaps the best known artist represented here, but watch out for the forthcoming installation by Marina Abramovitz, who was last seen walking from one end of the Great Wall of China to the other.

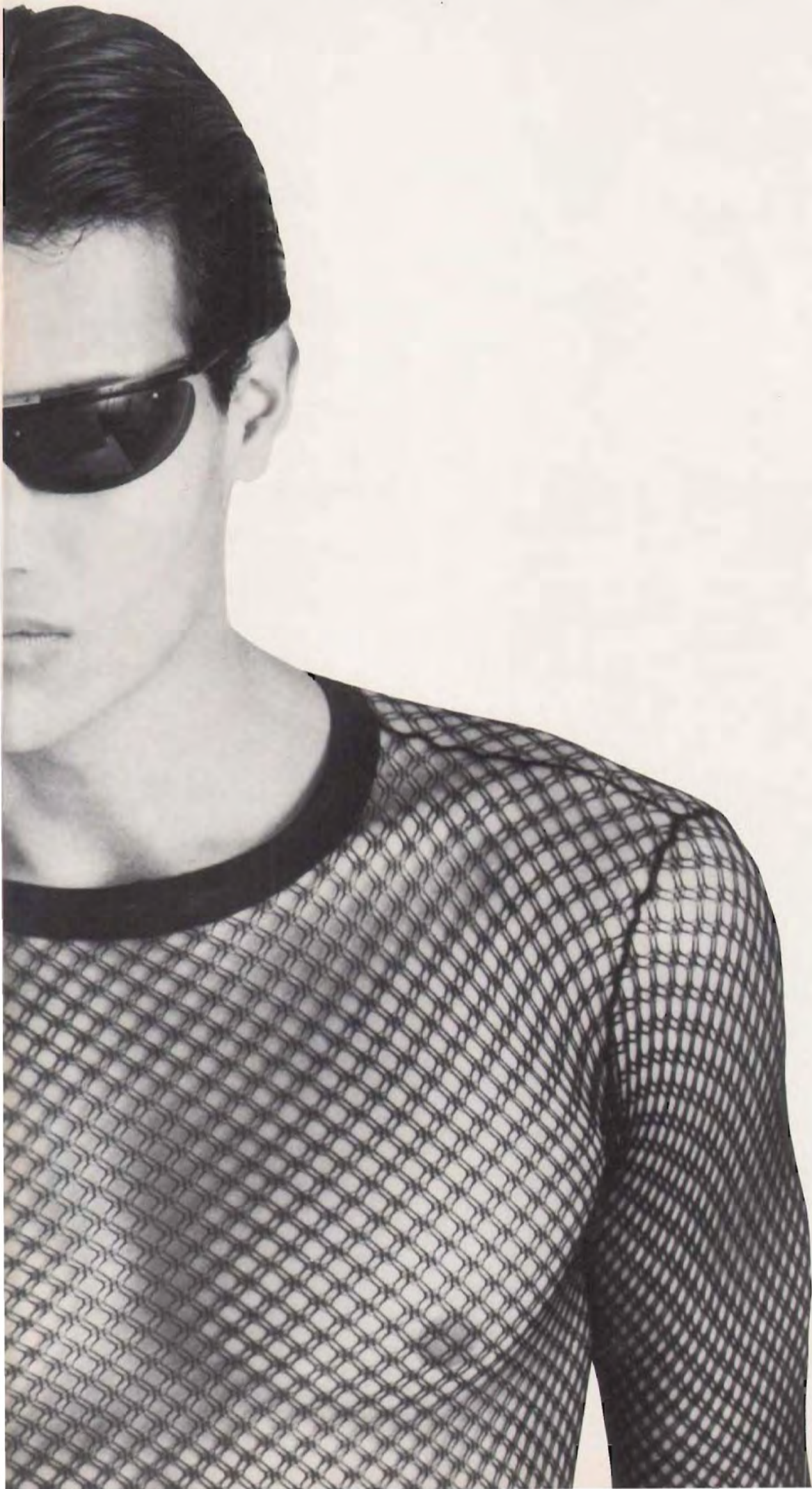
WADDINGTON GALLERIES 2, 4, 11, & 34 Cork Street, W1 With a name that seems to appear on every other door in Cork Street, Waddington is very much in the mainstream of the contemporary scene, if relying a little on well-established artists. Julian Schnabel's show last year kept crockery shops in business with a return to his broken plate paintings. Watch out for George Condo from New York with his first British show. Jim Dine and Patrick Heron are familiar names showing over the next few months. If the prices make you weep, drop into number 4 which is devoted to graphics.

YOUNG UNKNOWN'S GALLERY 82 The Cut, SE1

Much scandal and a court case followed Rick Gibson's recent exhibition, which included a pair of earrings made from freeze-dried human foetuses hanging from a wide-eyed mannequin. Both artist and Peter Sylveire, gallery-owner, were found guilty of outraging public decency, and were fined accordingly. Not all shows have been, or promise to be, so radical or subversive, but should always demand attention. As the name suggests, the gallery specialises in discovering young unknowns, generally at very reasonable prices.

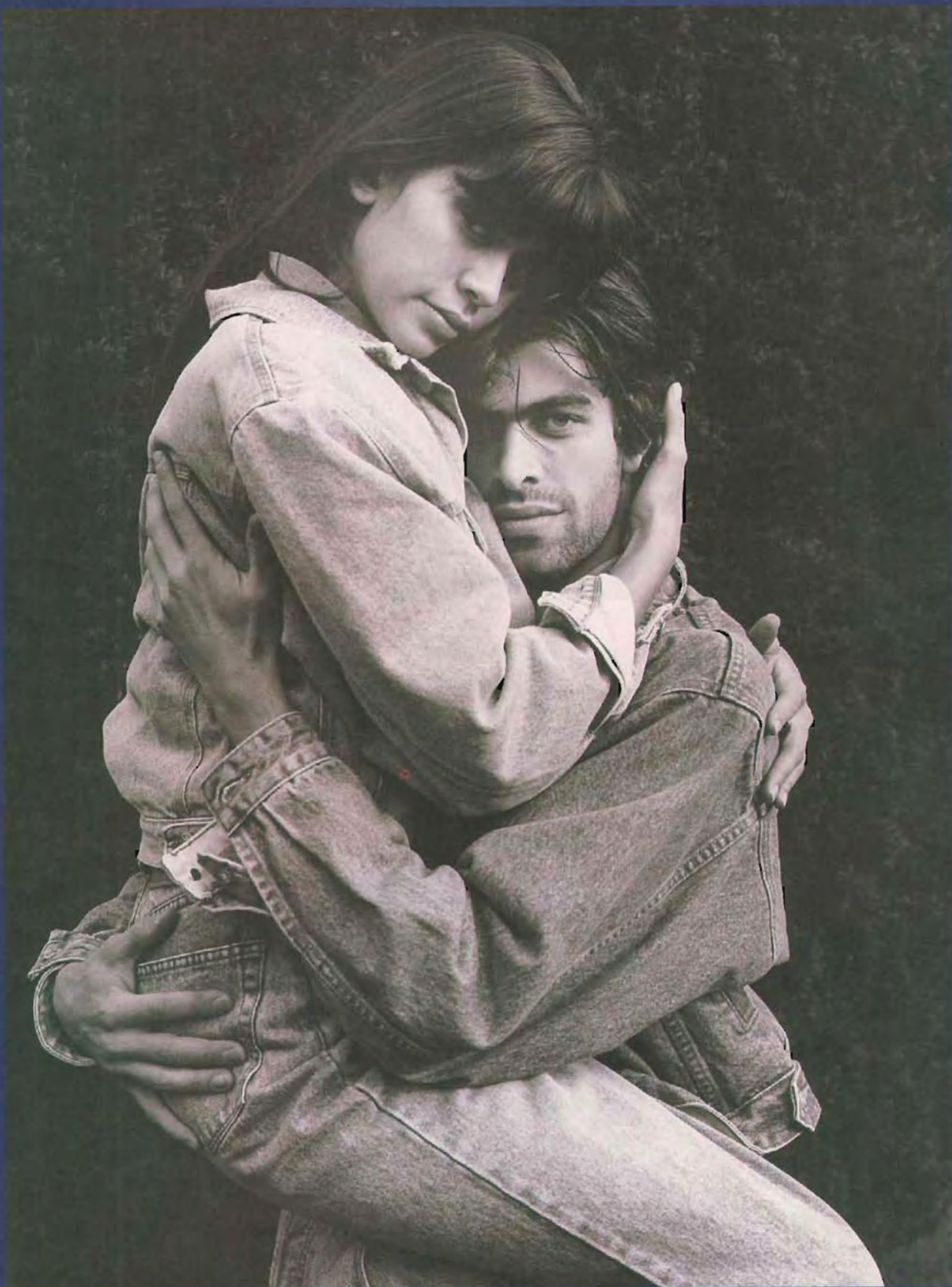


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